A GUIDE to the CONSERVATIVE LIFESTYLE

RICK PERLSTEIN, KELLY ALEXANDER, MICHELLE COTTLE, EVE FAIRBANKS, NOAM SCHEIBER

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CORRESPONDENCE

JACK SMACK

TRYING TO DETERMINE THE POLITICS of "24" is ultimately futile. The show is not conservative, liberal, or something in between ("Kiefer Madness," May 22). Whatever the creators' original intent, "24" has evolved into a purely self-referential combination of high camp and black comedy. For example, parsing "24"'s true agenda could lead to the conclusion that it is decidedly pro-terrorism. Terrorists succeed brilliantly until they are finally stopped at the cusp of total victory. Last season's Middle Eastern raiders—operating against a chronically dysfunctional government agency—managed to do far more damage to the United States than real ones inflicted on September 11. In the real world, this would have been an epic victory for Islamofascism and a crushing defeat for protagonist Jack Bauer and friends. But, in the world of "24," it doesn't matter. What "24" is really about now is "24." Its themes are entirely repetitive, internal, and unserious. Thus the explosion among viewers of "kill counts" and drinking games based on the show's predictable internal conventions.

JONATHAN F. KEILER
Bowie, Maryland

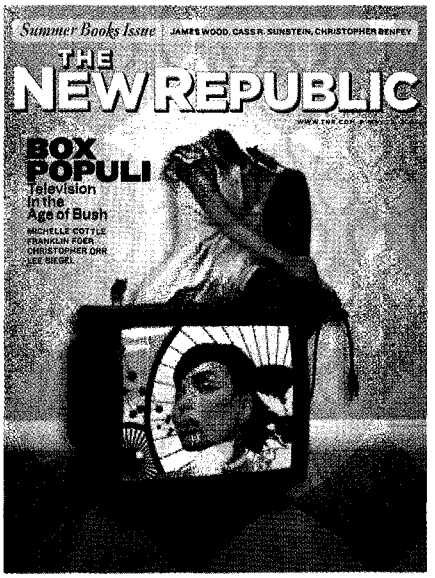
MEN OF THE HOUSE

IN THIS ERA OF GREATER INDEPENdence for women (and the ensuing demands on their time), what marriages need is not an extra wife, as Michelle Cottle contends, but an extra husband who can serve not only to earn another wage, but also to maintain the household ("Two-Timing," May 22). Instead of the man needing two wives, a woman needs two husbands to maintain her position both in the workplace and in society.

NELSON MARANS
Silver Spring, Maryland

DONKEY WRONG?

LYNDON JOHNSON WAS REFERRING to people like Peter Beinart when he said that the difference between liberals and cannibals is that cannibals only eat their enemies ("Nice Ass," May 22). Beinart calls himself a liberal yet devotes his column to trashing liberals. He flays the Clinton administration and praises the Bush White House because its meetings are more disciplined. But it is results that count: Clinton's messy style of leadership brought the United States eight years of peace and prosperity, while Bush has failed at everything he has tried to accomplish.



REBA SHIMANSKY
New York, New York

BEINART BEMOANS THE RESPECT (or fear) that liberals pay to a generalized persona referred to as "NASCAR Man," who believes that liberals are "high-taxing, culturally libertine, quasi-pacifist wimps." Meet him, boys and girls, because this is the person who American politicians pretend to represent. Whether you agree with his cultural choices or not, they are the cultural choices of a huge percentage of the American public. They are also the group traditionally represented by the Democratic Party. I come from a small town and share the cultural biases of "NASCAR Man." I have watched with horror the drift of the Democratic Party away from bread-and-butter issues and toward an unattractive social agenda. I don't think that guns cause crime; poverty does. I go to church, and I don't see how a faith that teaches salvation from evil and love for others is a negative characteristic.

Liberal dilettantes need to decide whether they care to lead a deceptive party that, in order to get elected, attempts to trick people that they do not intend to serve—as the Republicans have done for decades—or if they truly care to serve the American people. Beinart got one thing right, though: "NASCAR Man is the guy liberals need to win, but usually don't." Perhaps NASCAR man is not so dumb after all.

JOHN BAINTER
Bothell, Washington

BEINART SAYS CONSERVATIVES gained power by deciding what they think and saying it. Wrong. They gained power by being good at running negative TV ads, because Democrats seem to be too squeamish to respond in kind. Why do liberals find this so hard to understand? In 1988, Michael Dukakis beat Dick Gephardt with negative ads, George H.W. Bush beat Bob Dole with negative ads, and then Bush beat Dukakis with negative ads. Does anyone think human nature has drastically changed since 1988?

DOUGLAS SCZYGELSKI
Lincoln, Nebraska

DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS

"Divining Divinity" (June 19) mistakenly identified the director of *The Clockmaker* as Alain Tavernier. The film was directed by Bertrand Tavernier. We regret the error. ■

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Dr. Bart D. Ehrman (Ph.D., Princeton Theological Seminary) is the James A. Gray Professor and Chair of the Department of Religious Studies at The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. He has won several teaching awards, including the Bowman and Gordon Gray Award for Excellence in Teaching. Professor Ehrman has written or edited 17 books, including the recent bestseller *Misquoting Jesus.*

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Tony Award

TRB FROM WASHINGTON

THE IRAQ WAR HAS PRODUCED three tragic figures. The first is Kanan Makiya, the courageous Iraqi liberal who went home to post-Saddam Iraq and discovered how illiberal Iraqi society had become. The second is Colin Powell, who went before the United Nations to sell a war in which he never truly believed—and suffered the greatest humiliation of his career as a result. And the third is British Prime Minister Tony Blair.

Blair's tragedy is the most global in scope, because he is articulating a coherent, desperately needed vision for the post-cold-war, post–September 11 world. It is a vision deeply rooted in the liberal tradition—and fundamentally different from that of George W. Bush. And yet, because Blair supported Bush's Iraq war, few liberals—on either side of the Atlantic—want to listen.

Critically, Blair's vision predates September 11. He began developing it in the late '90s—in the wake of the East Asian financial crisis and the Kosovo war. In those two disparate events, Blair saw a common thread: interdependence. Thailand's corrupt banking system had almost helped spur a global financial meltdown; Slobodan Milošević's aggression threatened to destabilize southeastern Europe. For Blair, the lesson was that, in a globalized world, countries export their problems—often across continents. And, as a result, Great Britain and the United States could only ensure their prosperity and security by more aggressively helping other countries govern themselves.

This was utterly different from what Bush was saying at the time. In the 2000 campaign, Bush attacked the Clinton administration for defining America's national interest too broadly. In his first eight months in office, he expressed less interest than Clinton had in what other countries did inside their borders. He also rejected or gutted no fewer than six international agreements or institutions. In fact, there was a certain symmetry to Bush's view of the world: The United States would meddle less in the internal affairs of other nations, and it would tolerate little meddling in its own.

Then September 11 hit, and Bush learned what Blair had several years earlier: Pathologies incubated in other countries can threaten the United States. But there were two key differences. First, for Bush, the lesson only applied to terrorism (and, relatedly, to weapons of mass destruction). Second, for Bush, interdependence only flowed one way. In the war on terrorism, the Bush administration began aggressively demanding that other countries change their internal behavior. But, led by sovereignty-obsessives like John Bolton, it still rejected any suggestion that interdependence required changing how the United States governed itself.

From America's preaching about human rights while it operates Guantánamo Bay to its demand for tougher nonproliferation rules while it builds a whole new class of nukes (not for deterrence but for potential battlefield use)—this is the basic contradiction at the heart of Bush's foreign policy. And Blair, as gently as he can, has been pointing it out. "There is a hopeless mismatch," he declared last month at Georgetown University, "between the global challenges we face and the global institutions to confront them. After the Second World War, people realized that there needed to be a new international institutional architecture. In this new era, in the early twenty-first century, we need to renew it."

To build that new architecture, Blair proposed empowering the U.N. secretary-general to respond rapidly to emerging humanitarian crises, before the next Bosnia or Darfur spins out of control. He proposed revamping the Security Council to include India, Germany, and Japan—so it better reflects the power realities of today. He urged fundamental reform of the International Monetary Fund. He proposed an international uranium bank that makes peaceful nuclear power easier and nuclear proliferation harder. And he called for a powerful U.N. environmental organization to coordinate dramatic action on global warming.

And then Blair turned the knife. "What's the obstacle" to such efforts, he asked? "It is that, in creating more effective multilateral institutions, individual nations yield up some of their own independence. This is a hard thing to swallow. . . . But the [alternative is] . . . ad hoc coalitions for action that stir massive controversy about legitimacy or paralysis in the face of crisis. No amount of institutional change will ever work unless the most powerful make it work."

That line about illegitimate "ad hoc coalitions": that's Iraq. "Paralysis in the face of crisis": Darfur. And the "most powerful" without whom such efforts will never work: He's talking about the USA.

In his speech at Georgetown, Blair offered a coherent, compelling alternative to Bush's vision of the world. In many ways, Blair's vision is actually more ambitious—after all, Bush has done little to improve the global environment or the international financial system. Blair's vision also flows naturally from the American liberal tradition: a tradition of institution-building that traces from Woodrow Wilson's League of Nations to Franklin Roosevelt's United Nations, IMF, and World Bank to Harry Truman's NATO.

And it dovetails nicely with the ideas of a more contemporary American liberal: Al Gore. Few remember it anymore, but, in the 2000 campaign, when Bush was talking about leaving other countries alone, Gore laid out a foreign policy doctrine called "forward engagement"—in which the United States would try to solve problems as close as possible to their source, before they metastasized into global threats. Blair ended his Georgetown speech by calling for "progressive preemption"—which means essentially the same thing.

But for many progressives, that term—"preemption"—sticks in the craw. And for good reason: the Iraq war that Blair (and I) mistakenly supported is fundamentally incompatible with his vision of a legitimate, rule-based international order. It has spoiled his reputation around the world and rendered him a lame duck at home. On the left in both Great Britain and the United States today, Blair is only marginally more popular than Bush.

That doesn't change the fact that his analysis of today's world is exactly right. His Georgetown speech provides an answer for a Democratic Party utterly lacking its own story about the post–September 11, post-cold-war age. Because of Iraq, however, few Democrats are listening. Such is the tragedy of the most visionary leader in the world today.

PETER BEINART

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Laughter Curve

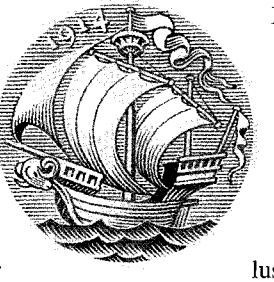
THE SUPPLY-SIDERS are back! OK, they never actually left. But they did seem to slink away for a while, as they habitually do when their predictions fall to shambles. Now, the economy is booming and they are claiming victory. William Kristol, editorializing in *The Weekly Standard*, exults the "wildly successful supply-side tax cuts." *Wall Street Journal* editorial page writer Stephen Moore gloats, "Tax collections for the past 12 months have exploded by 14.4%." It seems we have all died and gone to voodoo economic paradise.

And what bounty awaits us? Well, apparently the Bush administration's promise to cut the budget deficit in half over five years is on its way to being fulfilled. *National Review*, joining the fun, editorializes that "when President Bush announced his aim to cut the federal budget deficit in half by 2009, many critics guffawed. ... But the critics are no longer laughing."

Well, we're laughing. Don't we count? The reason we laugh is that, first of all, even if it were true, this would be a fairly modest achievement. Halving a deficit you *inherited* would be something to brag about. Halving a deficit you *created*, not so much. You don't see Bush's former chief domestic policy adviser Claude Allen boasting that he has returned half the merchandise he filched from Target.

Second, it's not true. In 2004, the Bush administration released a suspiciously high deficit projection for 2004. Every other sentient budget analyst at the time said the number was inflated. (The Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, for instance, wrote, "The Administration appears to have noticeably overstated the deficit for the current year, 2004.") Why would it inflate the number? So that when the real figure came in below its phony prediction, it could claim progress. The trick was utterly obvious at the time.

Yet now, the administration and its supporters are celebrating the deficit's fall from a number it never reached and that no honest person thought it would reach. *National Review* says this is "vindicatory of the central claim of supply-side theory." In fact, it's vindicatory of the theory that no number emanating from the Bush administration should be taken at face value.



It is true that tax revenue is growing. Tax revenue always rises during an economic expansion. But it's rising from a staggeringly low level. In 2003, income-tax revenue fell to its lowest point as a share of the economy since *before the United States entered World War II*. The fact that the deficit is going to drop to somewhere around $300 billion a year—with the economy red-hot—is not good news. It is a sign that our tax and spending policies are producing a large structural deficit. When the business cycle cools down again, the deficit is going to explode.

National Review happily reports that "the deficit is on track in the next few years to continue falling until it approaches 2 percent of GDP." Let us translate that statement: If the economy continues to grow without interruption over the next several years, we will still be borrowing 2 percent of our total economic output to finance government deficits.

To understand what a devastating indictment this is of the current administration, consider a contrast with the previous administration. At the peak of the last business cycle, in 2000, the government was running a surplus of 2.4 percent of GDP. That's what responsible fiscal policy looks like. When times are good, you sock away money so that you can spend it when times are bad.

The supply-side crowing presumes that, without deep and permanent tax cuts, the economy would have stayed in a recession forever. The "class-warfare groups," according to *The Wall Street Journal*'s Moore, "pretend that this robust expansion would have happened without the investment tax cuts." How does Moore explain the fact that we had an even more robust expansion before the Bush tax cuts took place? (In case the *Journal* needs a reminder, it reacted to the 1993 Clinton tax hike with a series of hysterical editorials under the rubric "THE CLASS WARFARE ECONOMY," each illustrated with a guillotine.)

And what will happen when the economy does slow down? Don't expect the supply-siders to confess that the tax cuts failed after all. Instead, they'll just return to their argument of four years ago—namely, that you can't raise taxes during a recession. That's the beauty of having a theory that can't be proved wrong. You never have to go away. ■

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Jerusalem Dispatch

Plan B

BY YOSSI KLEIN HALEVI

In April 1986, Israeli peace activists convened in the West Bank city of Hebron. Their aim was to rally support for a negotiated settlement, and they invited left-wing Knesset members and Palestinians to join them. But the event turned out to be dominated by a group of people they hadn't invited—settlers who beat and cursed the activists, blocked a road leading to the hotel where the meeting was to take place, and smashed the windshield of a Knesset member's car, eventually requiring the Israeli army to break up the mêlée. Allegedly orchestrating the violence, according to criminal charges later filed by two Knesset members, was a man named Otniel Schneller, the head of the Yesha Council, the umbrella organization of Jewish settlers. "We wanted to show that this kind of meeting—Jewish people meeting with the PLO and talking about how to throw the Jewish people from Israel—we think is very, very dangerous," he said, according to the *Los Angeles Times*.

Two decades later, it is Schneller who is devising plans to, as he might once have put it, throw the Jewish people from Israel. Now a Knesset member for the centrist Kadima Party, Schneller has been entrusted by Prime Minister Ehud Olmert with preparing maps for unilateral withdrawal in the West Bank. Schneller, whose knitted skullcap fits bowl-like on his balding head, still considers himself "very right-wing" and still lives in Michmash, a settlement between Ramallah and the Judean desert. That, combined with his past, might make him seem an odd advocate for unilateral withdrawal. But, for those Israelis who want their government to vacate large parts of the West Bank, Otniel Schneller has emerged as an unlikely—and fortuitous—ally.

A colonel in the reserves, Schneller, 54, moved to the territories in 1982. He came for security—not religious—reasons: He was convinced that preventing a Palestinian state was an existential Israeli interest. The first hint of Schneller's political transformation came during his nearly three-year tenure as secretary-general of the Yesha Council in the mid-'80s. Concerned that the settlers hadn't devised a plan for dealing with the Palestinian population, he proposed granting municipal autonomy to West Bank towns, a move he believed could forestall a Palestinian state. "The right only knew what it didn't want," he has written. "The lack of a political plan meant that we were dooming Israel to either endless war or a binational state." Fellow settlers, however, saw the proposal as a near-betrayal.

Several years later, the assassination of Yitzhak Rabin suggested that the real existential threat to Israel wasn't a Palestinian state but rather left-right divisions within Israeli society. Seeking dialogue with the left, Schneller found a partner in Professor Yair Hirschfeld, one of the initiators of the Oslo process. Last year, the two co-authored a book called *Bridge of Paper*, which offered a series of proposals seeking to unite the Zionist left and right around unilateralism. Peace, they agreed, wasn't an end in itself but a means to ensuring Israel's Jewish majority and Jewish identity. To achieve that end, Schneller conceded, Israel would need to withdraw from much of the West Bank. He even declared his readiness to "give up my home" for the sake of national cohesion.

While Schneller won't divulge the outlines of his map, it's clear he wants to retain at least 30 to 40 percent of the West Bank during the next withdrawal. That includes, according to Schneller, the strategic Jordan Valley, as well as Jewish enclaves inside the West Bank city of Hebron. (He envisions linking those enclaves with the nearby Jewish town of Kiryat Arba.) If that is indeed the future of unilateralism, we need to forget everything we've been told by the press about the West Bank security fence determining the border. And we also need to forget what we have been told by Olmert himself, who just last week declared in London that he aims to withdraw from 90 percent of the territories in an interim agreement with Mahmoud Abbas. That statement was hardly convincing: Olmert, whose foreign minister dismissed Abbas as irrelevant after Hamas's electoral victory, was probably just trying to prove he had exhausted the diplomatic option before moving forward unilaterally.

Compared with Olmert's vision of a 90 percent withdrawal, Schneller's more modest map makes sense, both politically and strategically. Olmert, after all, faces a public increasingly skeptical of unilateralism. According to a recent poll, only 37 percent support the plan. While Olmert almost certainly lacks the clout to uproot the 70,000 settlers who will find themselves on the wrong side of the security fence, he may be able to manage Schneller's plan, which calls for uprooting "isolated" settlements whose residents probably total no more than 20,000 settlers.

There are strategic virtues to Schneller's proposal, as well. With the rise of Hamas—along with the ongoing shelling of Israeli communities bordering Gaza—even many Israelis who backed withdrawal in Gaza now question the wisdom of withdrawal in the West Bank, which borders Israel's main population centers and infrastructure. Moreover, writing in *Haaretz*, journalist Ari Shavit, once an ardent unilateralist, recently pointed out that, if Olmert implements his plan, "the Palestinians will have sovereignty over the entire Gaza Strip and some 91 percent of the West Bank"—precisely Israel's offer to the

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Palestinians at Camp David in July 2000—"and all this without recognizing Israel and without ending the conflict." In other words, terrorism pays. Schneller's scaled-down map, by contrast, grants Palestinians considerably less than what they would have gotten had they opted for negotiations. It thereby dispenses with the absurd diplomatic consequences of Olmert's proposed 90 percent withdrawal, which would leave Israel with almost no territory to bargain over should final-status negotiations ever resume.

FOR SCHNELLER, THE key to his plan's success lies in winning support from the settler community—which he calls "my community." That won't be easy. What many settlers really think of Schneller's plan may have been best captured by a recent cartoon that appeared in the right-wing weekly *Makor Rishon*, which played on the fact that Schneller was one of the last people to visit Ariel Sharon before his stroke: As Schneller reveals his withdrawal map, Sharon collapses.

Indeed, Schneller's self-appointed role as guardian of settler interests irks many of his former allies. "Otni constantly refers to himself as a settler from Michmash," says one neighbor. "But who gave him permission to speak in our name? Otni doesn't represent anyone but himself, but he uses us for his purposes." Longtime friends have distanced themselves, while others have called for more drastic measures: In a recent radio broadcast, radical Rabbi Dov Lior urged settlers to bar Schneller from their communal prayers. "A healthy body vomits out unhealthy elements," declared Lior.

A second roadblock facing Schneller's plan comes from the international community. Schneller believes that the key to persuading uprooted settlers to leave their homes peacefully is international support for Israel's right to remove the largest remaining settlement blocs—two near Jerusalem and the third centered around the West Bank town of Ariel—from any future negotiations and to continue construction in those areas. "That," he says, "is what will make it possible for Israel to withdraw with national consensus." Yet American—let alone European—support for Israel's right to build within those settlement blocs is hardly a given. After releasing its 2004 letter to Sharon affirming Israel's right to remain in some settlement blocs, the Bush administration promptly equivocated and explained that the final borders would be resolved only through negotiations.

The toughest sell, however, is also the one Schneller is best positioned to make: persuading his old settler allies to give up their dream of Greater Israel in order to save the Jewish state. He is convinced it can be done. When settlers "see the benefits of building and developing within the blocs, most will accept it," he says. "Maybe the fringes will resist, 5 percent, no more. And then the Israeli schism will be over." Which, after all, is the real peace agreement Otniel Schneller is seeking. ■

Cancer in the courts.

Drug Addiction

BY EZEKIEL J. EMANUEL

VIRGINIA WADDLED DOWN the corridor to an examination room. Her ankles were terribly swollen and her eyes were tinged with yellow. Five years earlier, she had been treated for a very small and early-stage breast cancer. For a while, she was fine—teaching third-graders, living with her husband and four children. Then, at age 56, her cancer came back. She began having difficulty breathing, and a CT scan revealed the cancer had metastasized to her lungs and liver. After a year and a half, the conventional drugs stopped working, but Virginia wanted to fight, and she opted for experimental drugs. The day she came to the office, Virginia had just completed a trial of a second experimental agent, but it had failed to halt the growth of the tumor in her liver.

One of the hardest parts of being an oncologist is explaining to a patient that her battle has come to an end. This has been made more difficult by the growing number of experimental drugs and treatments that give dying patients hope. While I began talking to Virginia about palliative care and hospice, all she wanted to know was if there was another experimental drug that she could take. I told her that her liver was not functioning adequately and her performance status—her energy level and the amount of time she spent resting in bed—excluded her from more trials. But, regardless of her eligibility, Virginia still wanted access to experimental drugs. Like many young, desperate patients, Virginia was willing to stake almost anything—hair loss, infections, nerve or lung damage, nausea and vomiting, even a high chance of death—on the unlikely prospect that an unproven drug could extend her life.

Recently, the courts decided that such a gamble is the prerogative of terminally ill patients like Virginia. On May 2, the District of Columbia Circuit Court ruled, in a 2–1 decision, that dying patients have a constitutional right to any experimental drug that has passed the safety phase of human testing—Phase I—even while the drug's effectiveness is still unproven and undergoing research. The case, *Abigail Alliance* v. *von Eschenbach* (for the FDA), was inspired by a 21-year-old with head and neck cancer named Abigail Burroughs.

In 2001, Abigail had exhausted conventional cancer treatments and wanted to get an experimental agent, Erbitux, being developed by ImClone—the biotech company

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of Martha Stewart fame—or another drug, Iressa, being developed by the pharmaceutical giant AstraZeneca. But, like Virginia, Abigail was too frail to qualify for the research trials. She died just three months after conventional treatments failed. Shortly after her death, her father, Frank Burroughs, started the Abigail Alliance for Better Access to Developmental Drugs, a nonprofit organization, which fights to ensure that cancer patients, no matter how sick and weak, can have their insurance companies buy any experimental drug that has passed safety testing. To this end, the Alliance sued the FDA.

But, while the D.C. Circuit Court ruling in favor of the Abigail Alliance might seem like a victory for patients like Virginia, it's not. What cancer patients really need are new drugs that are proven to fight and cure cancer, not access to an array of unproven chemicals that provide false hope. Furthermore, drugs with minimal safety testing could actually increase the suffering of patients dying of cancer. If implemented, the Circuit Court's ruling threatens the very research process that gets drugs tested and quickly delivers safe and effective ones to the most patients. This could force us to relive the types of historic tragedies that shaped federal drug policies in the first place.

IN THE SUMMER of 1937, Harold Cole Watkins, the chief chemist and pharmacist for the S.E. Massengill Company, set out to make a liquid form of sulfanilamide, a popular drug used to treat strep throat. He quickly discovered that sulfanilamide dissolves in diethylene glycol, and, after adding a raspberry flavor to the concoction, the company sent shipments of the new elixir across the country. But, rather than curing patients, the elixir caused severe abdominal pain, vomiting, and convulsions. Within two months, more than 100 people in 15 states, many of them children, had died. The solvent—diethylene glycol—was a form of anti-freeze.

For most of our history, drug manufacturers have had minimal oversight. After the Civil War, various patented remedies and cures—what became known as "snake oils"—were developed and sold to unsuspecting people. Many of the so-called treatments of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries made people vomit or explode with diarrhea. But, despite the need, there was little ability to test and regulate these concoctions. Doctors did not know how to design a real research study to see if a drug worked; even the statistical techniques necessary to evaluate a study were only just being developed for farming and had not migrated to health care.

Around the turn of the twentieth century, clinical research matured sufficiently to begin early drug-testing, although without today's scientific rigor. In 1906, Congress passed the Wiley Act, which gave the government power to recall drugs that were adulterated or misleadingly labeled. This was an attempt to get "cures" for diabetes and other worthless potions off the market. But the sulfanilamide tragedy created a public furor, and, in response, Congress passed the 1938 Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act, which required manufacturers to prove that drugs are safe before they can be marketed.

It took another tragedy for Congress to increase FDA regulation. In 1960, the Richardson-Merrell pharmaceutical company in Cincinnati submitted an application to the FDA to sell a drug called Kevadon. It was the very first application for Frances Oldham Kelsey, a new medical officer. After reviewing it, she decided that data from early safety trials were inadequate, and she delayed the approval. But other countries did not. European doctors, who had been prescribing the drug to pregnant women under the name Thalidomide, began to report an increase in deformed newborns. By the time the dangers of the drug were understood, thousands of deformed babies had been born. As a result, Congress passed the Kefauver-Harris Amendments, which required proof of efficacy before drugs could be sold.

The Thalidomide tragedy reminds us that even the early trials for safety (the Phase I trials) are not—and are not intended to be—foolproof tests of safety. Something safe enough to be subjected to further research does not imply it is safe enough to be sold to patients. Typically, these early Phase I studies are done on 20 to 80 patients. Many side effects, such as the deformities found with Thalidomide, just don't show up in the early-phase studies. Subsequent trials that typically involve hundreds and thousands of patients—though they focus on the efficacy of the new drugs—are also designed to closely monitor safety.

The Abigail Alliance approach would eliminate this kind of careful monitoring on larger groups of patients before widespread access becomes available. Instead, unproven drugs would be tested for safety in fewer than 80 people and then could be sold to patients. The benefit of a few desperate patients would come at a steep cost for the rest of us, especially the Virginias and Abigails of tomorrow. It would make it much harder to get people to enroll in research studies and get the data necessary to show whether a drug really was effective or not. Why should people enroll in a randomized, controlled study—where they could be put in the group receiving only conventional treatment—when they could just get their insurance to pay for whatever drug they thought was best?

We have had experience with this "expanded access" folly before. In the late '80s and early '90s, there was tremendous excitement about treating metastatic breast cancer with bone-marrow transplants. The procedure was grueling and included risks like organ damage, life-threatening infections, and even death, and there was little scientific evidence it actually worked. But people were convinced it was a cure and persuaded many states to enact laws mandating insurance companies pay for transplants. Large, government-funded, randomized clinical studies were designed to evaluate its effectiveness, but over 20,000 women got transplants outside the trials. It took years to enroll just 1,000 women to complete the research.

The results: bone-marrow transplantation was not effec-

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What Does This Stand For?

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tive compared with regular chemotherapy. Precious time was wasted due to delayed enrollment. Thousands of women were unnecessarily subjected to bone-marrow transplants—and hundreds died in the process, often in isolation rooms separated from their families. Millions, if not billions, of dollars were spent on a substandard treatment.

If, as in the case of bone-marrow transplantation, the Abigail Alliance's "expanded access" delays research, then future patients with cancer will suffer because they will have access to fewer proven treatments. Americans will get access to unproven experimental agents for a few patients at the expense of more, faster research and access to proven treatments for every patient. This is the height of irrationality born of desperation. And it is the major reason why many, if not most, cancer advocacy groups oppose the Abigail Alliance's effort. As the National Breast Cancer Coalition put it: "[A] policy expanding availability of investigational new drugs for individuals outside of clinical trials will weaken the move towards more and better research, expanded clinical trials, and access to care for all Americans."

Expanded access would also rob the rest of us who may never need a cancer treatment. Individuals and society in general are struggling to pay the nation's $150 billion–plus drug bill. And that is for medications proven to work. Now add the requirement that insurance companies pay for drugs we don't know work, and you have a formula for financial disaster. Costs would skyrocket as we pay billions through our insurance premiums and Medicare taxes for worthless drugs.

GIVEN THESE PROBLEMS, why did the D.C. Circuit Court want to go back to the snake-oil days? Citing a physician-assisted suicide case, *Washington* v. *Glucksberg*, the Court argued that a "mentally competent, terminally ill adult patient [has a substantive due process right] to access potentially life-saving post–Phase I investigational new drugs." Essentially this makes access to unproven drugs a fundamental constitutional right, not just an interest that can be weighed against other interests. This sets an almost impossibly high bar for the FDA to overcome to restrict access to these drugs. More important, the Circuit Court seems to have gotten the assisted-suicide cases wrong. Chief Justice William H. Rehnquist made clear in both *Cruzan* v. *Director* (the 1990 case about terminating life-sustaining treatments) and *Vacco* v. *Quill* (a 1997 assisted-suicide case) that the right is not a right to die but to not have intrusive life-sustaining treatments imposed against one's wishes, based "on well established traditional rights to bodily integrity and freedom from unwanted touching." A right to bodily integrity does not imply a right to demand medical treatments.

The Circuit Court majority disingenuously claimed that the right it is recognizing is narrow, applying to terminally ill patients, but a constitutional right such as this cannot be so restricted. What about people suffering from multiple sclerosis, rheumatoid arthritis, congestive heart failure, diabetes, or any number of illnesses? They too would have the constitutional right to demand access to whatever experimental drugs they wanted, especially if there were no proven treatments for their debilitating condition. This is hardly narrow.

The court also made an argument from history: "[T]he government has not blocked access to new drugs throughout the greater part of our Nation's history. Only in recent years has the government injected itself into consideration of the effectiveness of new drugs." This is pure historical revisionism. The reason the government failed to limit access to new drugs in the nineteenth century was not based on philosophical or legal objections to such regulation but on limits of science and statistics.

Finally, the court all but ignored the fact that the FDA has not been deaf to the concerns of patients like Abigail. For example, in 1987, the FDA established something called a Treatment Investigational New Drug (IND). This has allowed tens of thousands of terminally ill patients to quickly access drugs before they are approved for general sale. The FDA gives Treatment INDs on the condition that the drug has shown some evidence of being effective (not just safe, as the Abigail Alliance would have it) and that giving it to the patient won't inhibit the collection of research data. But the advantage is that the administration of the drug is carefully monitored for safety. Amazingly, the Circuit Court's majority does not even acknowledge the existence of such a process, although, as the dissenting judge makes clear, the majority was well-aware of it.

IF WE'RE NOT protecting a dying patient's right to safe and effective drugs, what exactly are we protecting with rulings like *Abigail Alliance* v. *von Eschenbach*? What the Circuit Court seeks to preserve on behalf of the terminally ill is hope in a hopeless situation. As every oncologist knows, maintaining a dying patient's hope is essential to their quality of life. But maintaining hope should never be confused with delaying the research studies that could give hope to future patients or administering ever-more ineffective and unproven treatments. Often, giving toxic drugs is just an excuse for appearing to do something—no matter how futile, painful, and ultimately hopeless—rather than offering compassion.

Getting Virginia another experimental drug was not going to stop her breast cancer from growing and eventually killing her. I gently explained to her that investing all her energy chasing after another unproven drug was not going to help her and her family. Virginia was disappointed and refused to consider hospice, because she saw it as giving up. Holding her hand, I talked to her about spending time with her husband and daughters and making a videotape for her future grandchildren. We also discussed getting visiting nurses to come to her house. I saw her once more in my office. She was more accepting and found at least some of the activities meaningful. Because of her failing liver, less than three months later, she lapsed into a coma and died with her family present. ■

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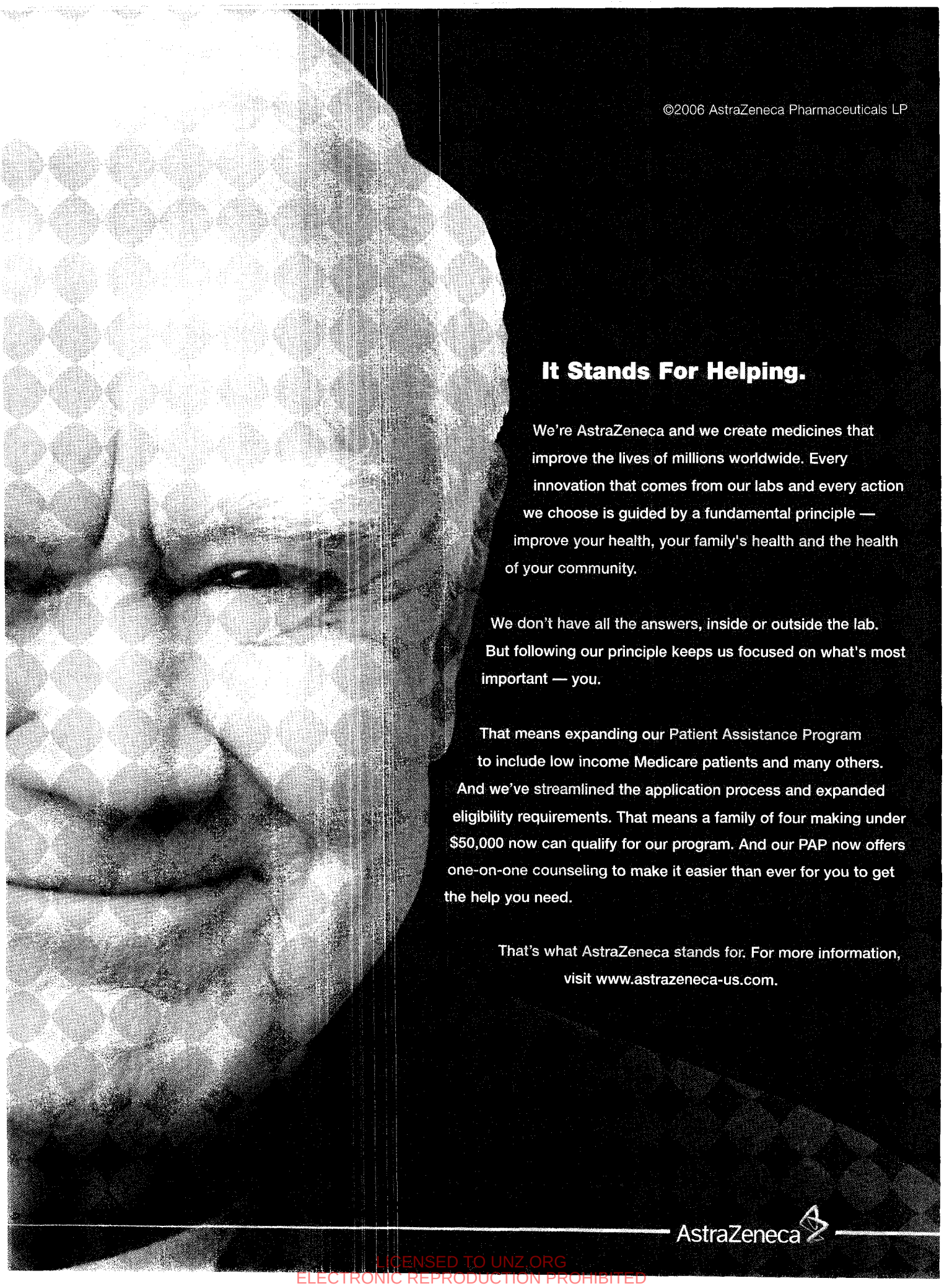

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What is conservative culture?

Mass Martyr

BY RICK PERLSTEIN

IN THE LONG march of the conservative ascendancy, *Folk Songs to Bug the Liberals*, the 1964 LP by the satirical conservative quartet the Goldwaters, was only a blip. Four Tennessee college students put on "AuH$_2$O" shirts and recorded an album of songs like "Down in Havana," "Barry's Moving In," and "Row Our Own Boat." They dropped out of school to warm up crowds before Goldwater campaign appearances. The record reportedly sold some 200,000 copies. The Goldwaters were never heard from again. I suggest a critical reconsideration.

Ask a conservative activist to explain what anchors and unites their fractious movement, and he will point to ideas: to weighty tomes by Eric Voegelin, Russell Kirk, Wilhelm Roepke, Edmund Burke; to the development of the philosophy of "fusionism," by which the furrow-browed theorists at *National Review* cogitated their way past the conflicts between the traditionalist, libertarian, and anti-communist strains of the American right. They will make it sound almost as if the 87 percent of Mississippians who voted for Barry Goldwater did so after a stretch of all-nighters in the library.

They will not mention an illustration popular among college conservatives in the 1960s: a peace symbol–shaped B-52 bomber with the words DROP IT on the wings. Nor will they discuss the annual "McCarthy-Evjue" lecture that student conservatives in Wisconsin (among them, present-day right-wing luminaries David Keene of the American Conservative Union and Alfred Regnery, formerly of Regnery Publishing) put on to honor their favorite Wisconsin senator and to mock, William Evjue, the editor of the Madison newspaper William F. Buckley labeled "Prairie *Pravda*." (They advertised the lecture on pink paper.) They will not mention the Southern Californians who flocked to church basements, high school auditoriums, and VFW halls to hear hellfire-and-brimstone lecturers like World War I flying ace Eddie Rickenbacker, author of *The Socialistic Sixteenth—A National Cancer*, or the Reverend Billy James Hargis ("Is the Schoolhouse the Proper Place To Teach Raw Sex?").

And they certainly will not mention the John Birch Society meetings in suburban parlors nationwide, in which chapters no bigger than two dozen members—a cell structure ostensibly to prevent Red infiltration but that, as it happened, was also the ideal size for a cocktail party—plotted how to forestall the Communist takeover of the PTAs by taking them over first. "I just don't have time for anything," a Dallas housewife told *Time* in 1961. "I'm fighting Communism three nights a week."

They will not mention, in short, the extraordinary role the development of a self-contained and self-conscious conservative *culture* played in transforming the politics of the United States. One way to define "culture" is not as a set of ideas or a static social code, but rather as the performances people enact in their everyday lives that outline the boundaries between those who belong and those who don't. "Culture" is the set of practices that reminds each individual within the group that they are normal and correct, that their beliefs are natural and true.

Conservative culture was shaped in another era, one in which conservatives felt marginal and beleaguered. It enunciated a heady sense of defiance. In a world in which patriotic Americans were hemmed in on every side by an all-encroaching liberal hegemony, raw sex in the classrooms, and totalitarian enemies of the United States beating down our very borders, finally conservatives could get together and (as track twelve of the Goldwaters' *Folk Songs to Bug the Liberals* avowed) "Row Our Own Boat."

But now conservatism has grown into a vast and diverse chunk of the electorate. Its culture has become so dominant that one can live entirely within it. Shortly after the Republicans took over Congress in 1994, a Washington activist could, if he so chose, attend nothing but conservative parties, panels, and barbecues; a recent Pew Research Center study suggested that partisan divisions are increasing at the community level. And yet, far inside these enclaves, conservatives still rely on the cultural tropes of that earlier period: At one living room "Party for the President" in 2004, a woman told me, "We're losing our rights as Christians.... and being persecuted again." The culture of conservatives still insists that it is being hemmed in on every side. In Tom DeLay's valedictory address, as classic an expression of high conservative culture as ever was uttered, he attributed to liberalism "a voracious appetite for growth. In any place or any time on any issue, what does liberalism ever seek, Mr. Speaker? More. ... If conservatives don't stand up to liberalism, no one will."

How to explain these strange continuities? And what does it say about the politics of our own time? Kirk offers no answers, because what holds the movement together isn't its intellectual history but its cultural one. *Folk Songs to Bug the Liberals* is this mystery's Rosetta Stone.

NATIONAL REVIEW recently began concentrating much of its energies on defining a canon of conservative popular culture. For instance, national political reporter John J. Miller compiled a list of "NR's top 50 conservative rock songs of all time": "Gloria" by U2, "Won't Get Fooled Again" by the Who, "Rock the Casbah" by the Clash. To outsiders, the choices will seem utterly inexplicable.

Rick Perlstein is completing a book to be titled NIXONLAND: THE POLITICS AND CULTURE OF THE AMERICAN BERSERK, 1965–1972.

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For some of the choices, Miller produces arguable, if fanciful, connections to conservative philosophy; the Who, for example, is singing an anthem "that swears off naïve idealism"—just like Buckley warned that conservatives should never "immanentize the eschaton." That at least half makes sense. But why does "Stand By Your Man" by Tammy Wynette make the conservative hit parade? Because "Hillary trashed it—isn't that enough?" Consider also number four, "Sweet Home Alabama"—a "tribute to the region of America that liberals love to loathe."

Conservatives are always beleaguered, always under siege. "I think we had better pull in our belts and buckle down to a long period of real impotence," *National Review* Publisher William Rusher wrote in a 1960 letter. "Hell, the catacombs were good enough for the Christians." Five years later, M. Stanton Evans wrote in *The Liberal Establishment*: "For decades Liberalism has ruled the government and opinions of the United States with little or no effective challenge to its pretensions."

Listen to conservatives now, and they're still in the catacombs. "Just because a rock song is about faith doesn't mean that it's conservative," *National Review* explains of U2's "Gloria." "But what about a rock song that's about faith and whose chorus is in Latin? That's beautifully reactionary." Note the tone of sturdy defiance: So few bold souls, these days, are brave enough to publicly profess that underground faith, Christianity.

The liberal colossus is somehow still just as colossal, despite the fact that Republicans have controlled Congress and the White House and shifted the news media's center of gravity to the right for several years. I have one 2005 book—forworded by Steve Forbes and blurbed by Evans, Buckley, and former Senator Jesse Helms—called *Free Choice for Workers: A History of the Right to Work Movement*. The flap proposes: "George C. Leef chronicles the thrilling 'David and Goliath' struggle between the bosses of Big Labor and the American citizens who oppose their lust for coercive power." Somehow, the conservatives have even pulled off making Wal-Mart sound like the little guy.

There's a precedent for acting beleaguered even in victory. In 1964, the Goldwater faction had just won a party presidential nomination. *Folk Songs to Bug the Liberals* was part of an avalanche of Goldwater kitsch—the more ostentatious the better—that loyalists lined up to purchase at campaign events: gold Goldwater pins, Goldwater cowboy hats, books, pamphlets, and magazines galore to pass on to your liberal neighbors. It was only one part proselytizing. It also proved the bearer's stout-heartedness. Its meaning *relied* on Goldwater remaining unpopular in an overwhelmingly "liberal" culture.

That is why, now that conservatives own the government, conservatives are still stuck in their past: Their marginal self-identity is who they are. The trick is inventing new ways to soak in one's marginalization. I have a favorite, more recent, manifestation. It costs $2,995. It is a 16-inch bronze bust of George W. Bush in his MISSION ACCOMPLISHED flight suit. The pleasure it gives, its manufacturer advertised in 2005, is ensured by its provocation. Let them call your Dear Leader a chickenhawk: "President Bush has demonstrated that he has political courage and that is why he was re-elected. By owning a bust of President Bush, Commander in Chief, you will be making a statement and in a politically charged environment, it takes courage."

As the number of conservatives has grown, we read every day of how jerry-rigged the conservative coalition is. Nothing could be more deceptive. What is remarkable about conservatism is how easily it hangs together. Conservative culture itself is radically diverse, infinitely resourceful in uniting opposites: highbrow and lowbrow; sacred and profane; sublime and, of course, ridiculous. It is the core cultural dynamic—the constant staging and re-staging of acts of "courage" in the face of liberal "marginalization"—that manages to unite all the opposites. It keeps conservatives from one another's throats—and keeps them more or less always pulling in the same political direction.

FOX INTERNATIONAL

Consider conservatives' virgins and whores. In some Christian right communities, a new kind of prom has sprung up, not for high school seniors but for prepubescent girls. They dress up in party dresses and take their fathers as dates. After the fox trot, the daughter reads to her father from a card: "With confidence in His power to strengthen me, I make a promise this day to God, my family, myself, my future spouse, and my future children; to remain sexually pure until the day I give myself as a wedding gift to my

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spouse." The father responds: "I, (daughter's name)'s father, choose before God to cover my daughter as her authority and protection in the area of purity."

That, in all its Victorian glory, is part of conservative culture. But so, in all its slatternly innuendo, is this e-mail from the far-right website *NewsMax*: "Ann Coulter Gone Wild," the subject line reads, after the late-night mail-order videos of college girls taking their tops off. Open it, and there stands Ann in a come-hither, skin-tight dress on the cover of her latest book—the one where she (courageously) accuses September 11 widows of being "witches" and "harpies." Conservatives call such right-wing raunch culture "'South Park' conservatism." It's also represented by the notorious website ThoseShirts.com, which sponsors many conservative blogs. Buxom ladies model silk-screen T-shirts like ALCOHOL, TOBACCO & FIREARMS SHOULD BE A CONVENIENCE STORE, NOT A GOVERNMENT AGENCY and a braying Hillary Clinton with a line struck through her face and the legend RE-DEFEAT COMMUNISM 2008.

Somehow, it works. Liberals are always going on CNN to "Sister Souljah" other liberals. But you never see the sponsors of purity balls going on CNN to denounce "Ann Coulter Gone Wild." Let 100 flowers bloom. Because, whether it is purity balls or impure thoughts about conservative talking heads—or the Orange County housewife fighting the creeping national cancer of socialism in her kitchen—all serve equally as markers of a beleaguered minority holding the line against the real enemy: ever-encroaching liberalism.

Consider another set of polar opposites that unfolded a few blocks and a few hours away from one another in New York during the second night of the Republican National Convention in 2004. Conservatives cheered Arnold Schwarzenegger booming from the podium, "To my fellow immigrants listening tonight, I want you to know how welcome you are in this party. ... It doesn't make any difference if you're like me and couldn't even speak English until you were in your twenties." They roared even louder when Laura Bush proclaimed, "We are determined to provide a quality education for every child in America."

Earlier, some of them had trooped down the street for "GOP Comedy Night" at the Laugh Factory. One of the conservative comics slayed them with, "Islamic prayer in Spanish—that's the next step." Another had them roaring with, "[W]e have to face the fact that there are some dumb kids. It's time to give just a few of them coloring books, some crayons—press on to what we can save."

Why do the bathos and the sadism both fit comfortably within conservative culture? The answer lies in the Goldwaters' liner notes: "CONSERVATIVES UNITE! Bug the liberals." Bugging liberals, you see, being bugged by liberals, is not incidental to conservative culture, but rather is constitutive of it—more so than any identifiable positive content. Seeing Republicans appropriate liberal-sounding rhetoric on immigrants and education and getting credit for it—even while their policies corrode public education and also stoke an anti-immigrant backlash—bugs the hell out of the liberals. Which is, for Karl Rove no doubt, part of the calculation. Rove knows that the pleasure of watching liberals' heads explode is the best way to keep his team rowing in the same direction.

To give credit where credit is due, conservative culture also has its monuments. Some might cite C.S. Lewis, others Winston Churchill's histories, others even Bach or Jane Austen. Fair enough, by the terms of my argument above: If you call yourself conservative and you consume it as a performance of your own "conservativeness," Austen and Bach are conservative—your own personal finger in the dike against the floods of liberal hegemony. (Bach might not inherently bug the liberals. But claiming him as conservative property certainly does.)

Purple Hearts are constitutive of conservative culture. So are Purple Heart Band-Aids. Both (conservatives feel) bug liberals. So is the simple pre-adolescent pleasure of blowing things up. That really bugs the liberals. The tone of conservative culture shades easily into a righteous lust for pissing people off. A billboard off the Dan Ryan Expressway in Chicago for a talk-radio station reads, LIBERALS HATE IT! For, if you piss people off, that proves you are beleaguered.

OVER THE LAST few years, as their own success challenged conservatives' feelings of marginalization, they just started working harder to sustain it. Fox News helps; that is why the vice president of the United States insists that any television in any hotel room he uses already be tuned to it before he'll deign cross the threshold. For conservatives, moving right will always be a losing career move, a sacrifice: "Veteran ABC newsman John Stossel ... abandoned his liberal perspective, became a libertarian—and paid a heavy price, he recently told NewsMax in an exclusive interview..."

And don't expect any of this to change much if Republicans lose the House in 2006 and the White House in 2008—or if Stossel somehow ends up in the gutter. A true conservative loves a test of faith: It only proves him stronger in his convictions. I often exchange e-mails with two favorite conservative activists. I started out with a plan: One of them posts frequently on *FreeRepublic*; another writes on his blog of *FreeRepublic*'s "shrieking lunacy." I've tried to get them to fight each another. It never works. They've got me, a liberal, to bug. That is how conservative culture works so well: the joy of feeling as one in their beleaguered conservatism. I've found, paradoxically, that, for this determined remnant, conservative identity becomes stronger the more discredited conservative governance becomes. They seem to take their lumps in stride and emerge all the more confident in their ideology from the challenge.

Hold on to your bronze busts of Bush in his flight suit. Among the true believers, its value is sure to appreciate. If his ratings fall below 30 percent, displaying it will really prove their courage. ■

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Dick Cheney's casserole.

Spam-a-Lot

BY KELLY ALEXANDER

"TELL ME WHAT you eat and I will tell you what you are," goes the oft-quoted adage from *The Physiology of Taste* by Jean Anthelme Brillat-Savarin, the nineteenth-century French lawyer and pioneer gastronome. So it was with great interest that I delved into *The Great American Sampler Cookbook*, which was published in 2004 and features more than 250 recipes from senators, congressmen, and even the president. Some politicians' entries were obviously given with attendant respect to geography—Iowa Senator Tom Harkin's pork chops, Samoan Representative Eni Faleomavaega's Island Samoan Chop Suey, Montana Senator Max Baucus's huckleberry pie. Then there is the "chicken Florentine." To make it, a cook should defrost two packages of frozen spinach; sauté them in butter, garlic, thyme, and basil; combine them with five cups of cooked, sliced chicken; top it with a sauce made of chicken broth, flour, half-and-half, and cut-up ham; cover this with parmesan cheese; and bake it at 400 degrees for 20 minutes. The author: Dick Cheney.

Consider Cheney, the man who is both the vice president of the United States and the former head of Halliburton, the man who reported a $1.9 million income-tax refund this year. The cost of all the ingredients to make this dish is no more than $20—or $3 per serving. If this is what Cheney really ingests for dinner, where is he hiding the $1,899,997? We're talking about a very rich man; it is difficult to believe that he's getting by on chicken casserole.

Cheney's recipe is an outstanding example of how conservatives are winning the war on flavor by appropriating traditional middle-class American food and making it their own. The result is that lefties today are consistently portrayed as folks who are out of touch with the tastes of the electorate—that they are members of what our president once so eloquently called the "brie and cheese" crowd. "There is the idea that, somehow, you think you are smarter and better than somebody if your taste buds are at all cultivated," says the Boston-based Democratic political consultant Michael Goldman.

WHAT'S SO INTERESTING about this conservative food movement, though, is that it's completely counterintuitive—you've got guys with big means carrying on about beans, literally. Outstanding examples of this abound in *The Great American Sampler Cookbook*. For instance, we have Tom DeLay's "Big Bend Bean Dip," which includes nothing more than pinto beans, an onion, some fat (bacon drippings or butter, it's up to the cook), cheddar cheese, and a few slices of canned jalapeño peppers. Nothing against bean dip, but is this blue-collar fare what DeLay really subsists on? Not bloody likely if restaurant records from Signatures (lobbyist Jack Abramoff's once-happening luxurious D.C. commissary) are to be believed. According to reports first published in *Time* and *The New York Times*, at Signatures—where a steak could run more than $70 and sushi and tasting menus were de rigueur—records show that DeLay was a regular and that there was even a dinner for 16 held for his PAC for $75 per person in a private room in April 2002. That there is no record of payment for this meal is a hotly disputed topic; regardless, what is interesting is the fact that $75 can buy almost five gallons of bean dip.

The only dish in the entire book that really costs a significant amount of money to prepare is prime rib from Nebraska Senator Ben Nelson, a Democrat who is obviously paying homage to his state's legacy of corn-fed beef. This reminded me of a story: An acquaintance ran into no less a conservative personage than Jesse Helms at an outpost of the Bojangles' fried chicken franchise in downtown Raleigh, North Carolina. Helms reportedly ordered the dirty rice, and I have no reason to believe it's not true; in fact, I would be shocked if Helms ate anything, say, Korean, in his entire life. But a lot of these conservative folks are really well-traveled and sophisticated in ways that Helms has never pretended to be. So why is the public buying the fact that a guy like Montana Senator Conrad Burns, another Signatures regular to whom Abramoff and his clients gave $150,000 for reelection, really eats something called "Quick and Easy Taco Meatballs" for dinner?

The conjuring of a conservative public persona relies on using food to portray the "regularness" of its eater. "People want to know that you're going to eat a Hershey's bar, not $20 chocolate from Godiva. That's snobby," Goldman says. Marlin Fitzwater, presidential press secretary for Ronald Reagan and the first Bush, concurs. "If you say of a candidate, 'Well, he likes béarnaise sauce on his steak,' it has no meaning to me. But, if you say he eats three kinds of broccoli, I might say, 'That's a little weird.'" Spoken by a man who worked for a president whose sworn enemy was just that green vegetable.

If anything, the conservative food agenda seems devoted to being one thing: plain. In the staff dining room of the right-wing American Enterprise Institute (AEI), which recently published an article on its website by visiting fellow Kenneth P. Green called "VEGAN-ORGANIC LIFESTYLE DOESN'T HELP EARTH, ISN'T NECESSARILY BEST," the menu is the expected fare—chicken, beef stroganoff, et cetera—although spokeswoman Veronique Rodman says that the chef has a health bent and tries to cook without cream.

Daring fare is also rare in the more than 250 recipes in *The Great American Sampler Cookbook*, not one of

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which—unless you count Maine liberal Republican Olympia Snowe's baklava—can be considered truly exotic; only eight are for fish entrées. Fish seems to be a sticking point for conservatives in general. In the (mostly) gag cookbook by Susanne Grayson Townsend, *How to Eat Like a Republican: Or, Hold the Mayo, Muffy—I'm Feeling Miracle Whipped Tonight*, there is a neat summary of a nonconservative's perceived palate: Liberals are "arugula eaters. The people who buy free-range chicken, prepare their own duck confit, and establish relationships with their fishmongers in order to get first crack at all that fish the Republicans wouldn't touch with a stick." The fish chapter consists of just one sentence: "To tell the truth, Republicans don't much like fish."

IF ANY FARES emerge as conservative favorites, it's Southwestern cuisine and heavily assimilated ethnic food. *The Bush Family Cookbook*, written by longtime Bush family chef Ariel De Guzman, depicts such examples as "Taco Day" (a buffet that is "the most popular get-together dish in the Bush household") and nonintimidating banquet staples like chicken kiev. A note from the author below a recipe for Mongolian beef particularly interested me: "President (41) and Mrs. Bush love Asian cuisine. When friends are invited for dinner, they don't hesitate to request Asian food. ... So keep that in mind as you plan a meal of Asian dishes throughout the book, which are some of the President and Mrs. Bush's favorites."

De Guzman's book gives a nod to the notion of "ethnic" cuisine by saying the Bushes weren't afraid of it, but it then offers up only an extremely homogenized dish as an example—one that could be found in any "Chinese" restaurant in the world; it's not as if the Bushes love Asian food and don't hesitate to request zheng shi-ban yu (steamed rock cod).

What would happen if a conservative like, say, Rick Santorum suddenly admitted a preference for an exotic food like sushi? "He would be the butt of every political joke in Pennsylvania," Goldman predicts. Fitzwater doesn't argue. "Sushi for Santorum is interesting just because, if there was ever a food I associated with any president, it isn't sushi. Has there ever been a sushi president? I can't think of one," he says—and then, as if on cue, admits that he himself is a sushi fan.

The point here is not that conservatives don't like foreign food or that they honestly eschew expensive food. It's that they've mastered the art of faux populism—the vast majority of them probably like their sushi as much as any liberal. They've just figured out how to appear as if they don't.

For the record, a call to Santorum's office yielded the information that Italian and Chinese foods are the senator's favorites. When Santorum says "Chinese," do you think he means the Bushes' Mongolian beef, or something more unfamiliar, such as Szechuan pepper crab? Perhaps it's time to update the Brillat-Savarin aphorism: Tell me what you eat, and I will tell you who you vote for. ■

The right's bedtime monster.

Nitwit Lit

BY MICHELLE COTTLE

SOME DAYS, MODERN parenthood feels like an ever-expanding spiral of anxiety. Is your child watching too much "Wiggles"? Will she be seduced by an Internet predator? Will video games inspire him to shoot up his preschool? As if this situation weren't stressful enough, Eric Jackson, chairman and co-founder of World Ahead Publishing, wants conservative parents to contemplate one more nightmarish scenario: What if, God forbid, your indescribably precious offspring grows up to become ... a liberal?

With an eye to forestalling such heartbreak, last September, the Torrance, California–based press, which touts itself as "the West Coast's leading conservative publisher," launched its own children's division, Kids Ahead. While the adult imprint focuses on titles addressing "serious and weighty matters" like *Their Lives: The Women Targeted by the Clinton Machine*, Kids Ahead aims to bring the conservative message to the playdate set. The mission, explains Jackson, "is providing books for families who have traditional values, if you will, and who want to have books to use as a tool to pass on those values to their children."

Thus far, the new imprint has only one writer in its stable: Katharine DeBrecht, the pen name of a mother of three whose authorial debut, *Help! Mom! There Are Liberals Under My Bed!*, generated major buzz—and sold some 30,000 copies—after receiving an on-air plug from Rush Limbaugh. In the wake of DeBrecht's success, Kids Ahead is moving forward with an entire *Help! Mom!* series. *Help! Mom! Hollywood's in My Hamper!* hit stores in March, *Help! Mom! The Ninth Circuit Nabbed the Nativity!* will be out in time for Christmas, with *Help! Mom! There Are Lawyers in My Lunchbox!* to follow. Jackson, meanwhile, is wading through a flood of manuscripts from other would-be authors. "Over the past six to twelve months, the number of submissions to us has just soared," he marvels.

With a little luck, the 30-year-old Internet marketing exec–turned–publisher hopes to usher in a new breed of kiddie lit geared to these bitterly partisan times—one that will make '90s relics like *Heather Has Two Mommies* look like, well, child's play. Forget championing traditional values à la *The Book of Virtues*; Jackson is hawking ideological warfare. There's just one problem. If the *Help! Mom!* series is any indication, the company has no intention of publishing real children's books. Rather, it plans to cash in on the right's enduring paranoia about the liberal assault on its values by churning out partisan tracts awash in humor so simpleminded that they could only succeed in the guise of

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kiddie picture books—not conservative books for children so much as childish books for conservatives.

THE OPENING PREMISE of *Help! Mom!* is straightforward enough: Two grade-school brothers set out to earn money for a new swing set by opening a lemonade stand. But, when the aspiring entrepreneurs dream one night about "a very strange place called Liberaland," the story shifts into satire-saturated adult fare, as a series of "dastardly Liberals" pop up to meddle in the venture. A Ted Kennedy look-alike ("Mayor Leach") demands half the boys' take in taxes, a Hillary Clinton–inspired "Congresswoman Clunkton" makes them cut the sugar in their product and give out broccoli with each glass, and an "LCLU" lawyer replaces their picture of Jesus with that of a big toe.

With its unflattering caricatures (the wild-eyed Hillary alone is enough to give kids nightmares) and relentless stereotyping of godless, humorless, tax-happy liberals, DeBrecht's book is tailor-made for the same readers who regard Ann Coulter as one of the great political thinkers of our age. What remains less clear is how anyone could imagine that the four- to eight-year-olds for whom the book is ostensibly intended would be entertained by a story dependent upon such context-driven humor as Clunkton's assertion, "It takes a village to get kids to eat their vegetables!"

"These books are written more as parodies of children's books," says Kathleen Horning, president of the American Library Association's division of Library Service to Children. "The story doesn't deal with the issues from a kid's point of view," agrees Roger Sutton, editor-in-chief of *The Horn Book*, the foremost reviewer of children's lit. "It's the hectoring adult 'liberals are bad, bad, bad,' kind of thing. Kids don't think that way." Certainly the illustrations (by a veteran newspaper cartoonist) aren't designed to advance the narrative so much as to provide an opportunity for political commentary, some of which, ironically, is not family-friendly: Even hard-core liberal-haters might hesitate to explain to kids a main street featuring "Teddy's Carwash."

DeBrecht staunchly maintains her books are for children and even has an anecdote about how her eldest son inspired the series' title: One night during the 2000 GOP convention, as DeBrecht labored to explain to the then–four-year-old the need for a Republican president—"The harder daddy works and the more money he makes, the more that liberals want to take that money"—the tot's eyes grew wide, he peered over the edge of the bed, and he asked breathlessly, "Where are these liberals, Mom?" How adorable is that?

BUT, FOR ALL her concerned-parent talk about teaching children that "there is a better way," DeBrecht's work isn't about promoting values. It's about demonizing the opposition—which is what sets it apart in the world of children's literature. *Help! Mom!* is hardly the first kids' story with a political point. Dr. Seuss books in particular are famous for their politics, which grew increasingly overt over the course of author Theodore Geisel's career. Most politically savvy adults read *Horton Hears a Who!* without ever recognizing it as a commentary on McCarthyism; *The Butter Battle Book*, by contrast, is an open slap at the cold war arms race. But, even at Geisel's most unsubtle, his books remained children's tales rather than political screeds.

Similarly, conservative authors writing for children had, until now, avoided the overtly ideological. Lynne Cheney likes to write American history–themed picture books, and Bill Bennett reworked *The Book of Virtues* to create an entire juvenile oeuvre (*The Book of Virtues for Young People*, *The Children's Book of Virtues*, *The Children's Book of Heroes*, *The Children's Book of America*, *The Children's Book of Faith*). But, while their offerings may touch on broadly conservative themes like patriotism and self-reliance, they are for the most part self-consciously apolitical. Even the pugilistic Bill O'Reilly, in his 2004 best-seller—modestly titled *The O'Reilly Factor for Kids: A Survival Guide for America's Families*—eschewed partisan rhetoric, focusing on topics like the value of compromise (irony alert!) and how to cope with and avoid being a bully (!!). If anything, most conservative kiddie books seem more like vanity projects aimed at softening the images of their celebrity authors than at any sort of transgenerational indoctrination.

So perhaps it's unsurprising that it fell to an unknown, first-time author, whose political claim to fame was co-chairing South Carolina Security Moms for Bush in 2004, to bring children's books down to the level of today's adult political discourse. Or even lower: DeBrecht trots out tired stereotypes and arguments so simplistic that few grown-ups would try to pass them off as political commentary. "They're using the format of a children's book to cheat," says Sutton. "You wouldn't get away with anything said in the book except that it looks like a children's book." Too pedantic for children, too moronic for adults, the books thrive only as some kind of confused novelty hybrid.

This suits Eric Jackson just fine. Well-aware that the adult conservative press thrives on such nuanced fare as Michelle Malkin's *Unhinged* and Sean Hannity's *Deliver Us From Evil*, World Ahead's publicity machine has been fanning the partisan flames. In interviews and press releases, DeBrecht is portrayed as a courageous mommy, and political indoctrination of one's offspring is pitched as part and parcel of good parenting. Then, of course, there's the requisite Hillary-bashing: In March, World Ahead hosted an online charity auction in which people bid to appear in a future DeBrecht book as the "hero" who carts Hillary Clunkton off to jail. In the press release, DeBrecht coyly speculates as to the cause of Clunkton's downfall: "[P]erhaps she'll be sent up the river for trying to snatch gifts from Santa's sleigh for an affirmative action program for naughty kids. You just never know what a liberal like Clunkton is going to do next!"

You never know, indeed. It's much less difficult, however, to divine exactly what type of reader will be entertained by this kind of humor. Hint: It's not your six-year-old nephew. ■

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Investing in sin.

Mutual Fun

BY NOAM SCHEIBER

In 2004, a group called the Rainforest Action Network (RAN) began pressuring JPMorgan Chase to cut off ecologically unsound projects, such as a Morgan-financed oil pipeline through the Ecuadorian Amazon. The effort consisted mostly of standard activist fare—protests at branch offices, a blitz of accusatory ads. But one tactic especially galled conservative busybody Steve Milloy: In December, RAN dispatched a contingent of second-graders from Fairfield, Connecticut, to protest the bank's lending policies at its Manhattan headquarters. Milloy, who would later dub the incident "ideological child abuse," mobilized for a fight.

Except that Milloy wasn't satisfied with the usual conservative agitprop. What he had in mind was something new: a mutual fund dedicated to battling the creeping influence of environmentalists and other leftists over corporate America. His Free Enterprise Action Fund would invest in companies being bullied by liberal activists. These investments would, in turn, allow him to attend the shareholder meetings as a kind of counter-mau-mau-er. In the spring of 2005, for example, JPMorgan had appeased RAN and its allies by, among other things, committing the company to advocating reductions in greenhouse gases. Milloy subsequently showed up at a JPMorgan annual meeting and laid into CEO William Harrison for making the company "a tool of the radical environmental movement."

There was a time when being a right-wing investor meant you cared about the same things as every other investor, only more so. Conservatives were the cold, unemotional types who would sell their kids into slavery if it meant boosting their portfolio. But, these days, Milloy and a handful of like-minded fund managers seem more interested in scoring ideological points than in scoring a buck. It's enough to make you pine for a good old-fashioned tightwad in a pinstriped suit.

The annual Doctors for Disaster Preparedness (DDP) conference is hardly the place you'd expect to find a mutual-fund manager prospecting for investors. The DDP was formed in the early '80s to lobby for a strong civil defense as insurance against Russian nukes. After the Soviet Union's demise, it refashioned itself as a kind of existential-threat referee, sorting out "manufactured" dangers (like global warming and ozone depletion) from real ones (like the risk of a dirty-bomb explosion). Suffice it to say, DDP members seem more interested in the apocalypse than their 401(k)s—the group's website features an ad for a "24/7 Radiation Monitor and Alarm" called NukAlert. And, yet, there was Milloy pitching his fund at last July's DDP gathering in Las Vegas.

Milloy is revered in some conservative circles for his skeptical writing on subjects like climate change and the dangers of secondhand smoke. (Under the headline "WAITING FOR GORE-DOH...," his website, JunkScience.com, tracks the time elapsed since he challenged Al Gore to a global-warming debate.) As THE NEW REPUBLIC reported earlier this year, much of the financing for Milloy's science-debunking comes from the oil and tobacco industries, though that hasn't stopped it from running in such outlets as *FoxNews.com*. (Milloy didn't respond to my requests for comment.) This conflict of interest doesn't appear to trouble DDP, either. "He has written so eloquently about rational risk assessment, debunked damaging myths," gushes DDP president and internist Jane Orient.

Once Milloy finished his spiel, the doctors practically stumbled over themselves lining up to invest. "During the Q&A period, there was more than one person that got up and said, before asking a question, 'I'll go home and write you a check,'" says Jack Dini, a conference attendee who personally forked over $1,500.

In making the case against Wall Street, conservatives like Milloy wield a historical narrative that goes something like this: Up until about 30 years ago, liberalism was the most potent political force in the country. But conservatives started to regroup in the 1970s, and, three decades later, they finally conquered Washington. It was then that liberals did something truly insidious: They shifted their focus onto the boardrooms of corporate America, where they could implement their enviro-feminist-multi-culti-socialist agenda without ever winning an election. Recent liberal triumphs include the anti-sweatshop campaign against Nike and Reebok and the effort to win gay partnership benefits from Home Depot.

To gauge how exercised conservatives are by "corporate social responsibility," you need only consult a recent fatwa issued by supply-side guru Arthur Laffer, father of the eponymous curve. Laffer's pronouncement took the form of a study purporting that socially responsible companies underperform relative to their competitors. This is the old conservative complaint: Being a do-goodnik is bad for the bottom line. But there is also a new, more ideological argument that explains why a corporate shill like Milloy would transform himself into a CEO-stalking gadfly: If the social responsibility movement isn't defeated now, it will eventually undermine the entire American way of life. Call it the Domino Theory of anti-capitalist subversion.

The irony is that, in order to stop this imminent collapse of the capitalist order, conservatives are themselves making investments that are bad for the bottom line. The fine print in the Free Enterprise Action Fund prospectus notes that Milloy's investing guidelines "may cause the Fund not to perform as well as other Funds that choose their investments based strictly on financial considerations." In 2005,

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the fund earned an anemic 2.3 percent return. But, despite this, Milloy attracted over $5 million from investors in a single year. And it's hard to find one who isn't satisfied with the fund's psychic rewards.

Consider the case of Hugh Wise, an Action Fund investor who met Milloy while working as an industrial chemist in Washington, D.C. Wise says he transferred $1,000 from his Merrill Lynch account to the Free Enterprise Action Fund as soon as Milloy mentioned the new venture. He did so because he deemed it important to "take environmental issues out of the mix for considerations for major corporations ... to dismiss them with ridicule if necessary." Wise doesn't expect to make any money from his investment, but he believes in the cause so strongly that he eventually kicked in another $1,000.

NOT EVERY CONSERVATIVE is ready to blow his nest-egg on an ideological statement, of course. For those conservatives, Dan Ahrens has created just the fund. Back in 2002, the Dallas-based mutual-fund executive could barely contain his schadenfreude when a group of socially responsible mutual funds (known as SRIs) got trampled in the tech bust. Ahrens began joking to friends that he could have made a killing investing in all the tobacco, alcohol, gaming, and aerospace companies the SRIs spurned. On a lark, he plotted the recent performance of these sectors and realized he was right. These efforts eventually begat the "Vice Fund," which Ahrens promised would invest at least 80 percent of its money in various "vice" industries.

As gimmick funds go, the Vice Fund has been a minor hit, attracting roughly $50 million in capital during the three years Ahrens ran it. Ahrens claims the fund's primary mission is to make money, and it's true that the fund has posted above-average returns. But it's hard to avoid the impression that Ahrens was as eager to make a point as the SRIs he scorns. In his book, *Investing in Vice: The Recession-Proof Portfolio of Booze, Bets, Bombs, and Butts*, Ahrens blasted the hypocrisy of SRI funds that invest in rapacious monopolists like Microsoft but not honest, well-run corporations like Anheuser-Busch. The fund's cartoonishly ominous, black-and-white website notes that the Founding Fathers were tobacco farmers and suggests there's something patriotic about investing in vice. It's a shtick that makes conservative publications giddy. "The introduction of the Vice Fund flies in the face of so-called socially responsible and morally responsible investing," crowed a *Washington Times* article in 2002.

Ahrens left the Vice Fund last September after a falling out with its parent company. From time to time, he still gets wistful about his Vice Fund glory days. "I'd love to be managing that fund still," he confided to me. That probably helps explain his latest venture: A mutual fund devoted entirely to gambling stocks. It almost makes you wonder if, somewhere in the conservative imagination, there isn't a Skin-Flicks Growth Fund lurking just around the corner. ■

Republican mating.

Mr. Right

BY EVE FAIRBANKS

MY FIRST DATE was a martini on a sunny Friday after work. From his personal ad, I knew that *Guns & Ammo* was one of his favorite magazines, that he loved stock-car racing, and that a snapshot of him in a CLUB G'ITMO T-shirt is posted on Rush Limbaugh's website. That morning, I rifled through my closet, unsure what to wear: Should I go Dr. Laura demure, with a church-social turtleneck and pearls? Or choose a plunging neckline and a tube skirt, in that Ann Coulter vixen style? Taking a wild guess, I selected a pinstripe suit, a pink shirt, and cowboy boots. I hadn't a clue—at least, not yet—as to what look would most appeal to an authentic conservative man.

About a month ago, I signed up for ConservativeMatch, one of the biggest conservative dating services on the Web. In recent years, a whole cottage industry of politically and socially conservative dating sites has flourished: At CowboyCowgirl, you'll find a match who shares your "love for the country way of life." At SinglesWithScruples, you'll discover that special someone who doesn't sleep around. For the rank and file, there's ElephantDates, Conservadate, ConservativeMatchmaker, and even Hannidate, an online dating service promoted by talk-radio host Sean Hannity.

Perhaps the proliferation of conservative dating sites merely reflects *GQ*'s recent claim that conservatives are better in bed. But I couldn't help wondering if conservative bachelors and bachelorettes, trading on their own meat market, have distinctive dating rituals and ideals for a mate. In other words, how does Ms. Right go looking for Mr. Right? I put up a profile, trolled the listings, and went on three dates to investigate.

"WITH A CULTURE that is often hostile to conservative values and to the people who hold to them," ConservativeMatch's home page proclaims, "our goal is to provide an alternative resource." To wit, directing my browser there, I discovered personal ads; political articles; discussion forums (such as "Liberals Need Not Apply"); and a calendar of conservative events. But, as far as the ideological quality of the users within, ConservativeMatch guaranteed me only one thing: "Sweethearts not bleeding hearts."

I needn't have worried. ConservativeMatch's signup process goes to lengths to ensure ideological authenticity. In its terms of use, I was forbidden to espouse the identity "gay." Developing my online profile, I was asked to agree, disagree,

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or declare uncertainty with a set of 14 statements testing my core "beliefs and values"—things like "Less government is generally better for society" and "Prayer should be permitted in public schools." This would be prominently displayed on my profile, providing a kind of quick, no-nonsense scorecard for my conservative purity. I filled it out in haste and tried to go on, but the page reloaded and scolded me: "Sex outside of marriage is immoral is a required field."

Once I signed up, I began to browse the site, choosing to look for conservative singles by city. The long list—each city marked with a star—made up a boundless conservative constellation. There are conservatives looking for love from Topeka to Tacoma; there are even hundreds of conservatives in the Philippines and a couple dozen in Pakistan. Searching for my own city, I saw that the only D.C.-area option available was "Washington, VA."

I began to realize that ConservativeMatch often resembles a parallel world, one that reflects what some idealistically minded conservatives might wish the real world could be: everyone's values, clearly delineated on a scorecard, hanging around their necks. Conservatism as a citizenship that surpasses national boundaries. And Washington safely where it should have been all along: in a red state.

THOUGH THERE ARE fewer of them, there are also liberal dating sites. Some of them operate to fight the impression that liberals don't adequately value marriage: During the 2004 presidential election season, one such site helped sponsor a contest to find a potential first lady for bachelor candidate Dennis Kucinich. Unfortunately, the winner turned out to have a boyfriend.

But, while liberal dating sites tend to promote a sense of shared mission to save the world (DemocraticMatch offers a free membership to anyone who has recently donated to an environmental group), conservative sites market themselves as oases set in the middle of a libertine and inhospitable popular culture. "Ladies," Conservadate's homepage asks rhetorically, "Tired of meeting men who are just looking to 'play the field'?" Some even encourage you to blame your past romantic flops on that old knee-jerk liberal prejudice. "Remember this?" the same site queries its male users. "You're dating, getting to know each other, and it seems like things are going well. Then she finds out you are a conservative and you get THAT LOOK? You know, the look that says, 'Oh and you seemed so nice.' "

This sales strategy works because conservatives with a particularly embattled mentality are the sites' natural market. If you're a conservative living in Kansas, you don't need to meet your ideological bedfellows online—you can find them in the grocery store. But if you're a conservative marooned in San Francisco, you really *need* a conservative dating site. This is why the top cities on ConservativeMatch aren't Dallas or Tulsa, but Los Angeles and New York.

With its polls, events, and forums, ConservativeMatch provides such embattled conservatives the chance to get together and engage on the topic of their alienation. The most charming manifestation of this sentiment is a movement on the site to refer to Democrats as "Vichi-crats." In the ConservativeMatch imagination, conservatives—even if they control every branch of the government—will always represent the underground Gaullist resistance to the liberals' sellout Vichy.

I MET MY first date, the *Guns & Ammo* lover, at a downtown grill, the kind of mass-manufactured, mahogany-toned place that flogs dry-aged steaks, cigars, and 800 labels' worth of wine. Amid the high-gloss crowd, Shooter stood out like a bird who'd accidentally flown into the wrong habitat: I spotted him perched awkwardly on a stool, clad in an oversized white polo with his company's logo on the breast. As I approached, he saw my cowboy boots and proudly tugged up his pants cuffs to reveal big black stompers of his own. We matched!

Our boots were just the beginning of a giddy game of conservative free association. Shooter said he liked William F. Buckley, and I revealed I'd met Buckley when he was a guest in one of my college seminars. "Really!" Shooter whistled. Shooter served Christopher Hitchens. I returned with William Kristol. It was like going out with a stranger and realizing that, by some great coincidence, he already knows some of your family: You feel relieved and excited; the conversation flows freely. Except, on this date, our mutual family was Buckley, Fred Barnes, and G. Gordon Liddy.

As the conversation eddied onward and the drink kicked in, I began to feel pleasantly enveloped, as if in a cocoon of joint understanding. Shooter began to tell a story. When he moved to Washington from his native Tennessee, he went to a Kinko's and found the service there much ruder than in copy shops back home—a sure signal he'd entered liberal territory.

At that moment, the story felt meaningful. I've always hated Kinko's, but I thought my hate was purely existential, like the feelings people have about the DMV. I had never before considered that my experience at Kinko's had a *political* implication.

WHAT KIND OF conservatives are in my dating pool on ConservativeMatch? As a little anthropological experiment, I took the first 40 profiles that came up when I browsed Washington, Virginia, and studied them. Some interesting trends emerged.

The women on ConservativeMatch—at least the women of Washington, Virginia—are both much rarer and more quintessentially "conservative" than the men are. Out of the 40 profiles I considered, only ten were women. Several of these described themselves as "simple," even "prudish" girls with "old-school" values, looking for a "manly" or "boy scout" sort of guy. ("He must not smoke, cuss, or spit.") All ten were seriously practicing Christians, and only one disagreed that sex outside of marriage is immoral. Favorite

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books included Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* (or, as one put it, "anything from 18th century England").

The men are strikingly different. They are not, for the most part, serious values conservatives. Over half of the 30 men I initially viewed believe that sex before marriage is OK ("Heck," one wrote, "I think that some marriages are immoral"), and twelve—or 40 percent—believe abortion may not need to be illegal. Their conservatism manifests itself more in a libertarian sensibility, in diehard patriotism, in the desire for a strong defense, even in matters of taste, like an appreciation for country living. Widening my search, I found that the ConservativeMatch man reads *National Review* and that, on any given day, you might find him "in a scholarly discussion of Supreme Court decisions at the Cato Institute or ... tearing out walls in an old house." Inexplicably, he has a fascination with all things Italian. When asked what kind of woman they're looking for, the men judge the stereotype of the meek conservative woman with scorn. They tend to prefer an "intellectually aware" and "self-assured" woman—perhaps even a woman who "dresses ... provacatively [*sic*]": "[A] little bit of an uptown girl," one wrote, "with a downtown spirit."

What does this divergence mean? It may reflect a national cultural demography: Women are more religious than men. They identify themselves as libertarian less frequently. And, historically, men have had the chance to partake more wholly of the American tradition of rugged individualism. The men on ConservativeMatch embrace a composite machismo of military culture, Western movies, the "don't-tread-on-me" spirit. The women simply don't want men to jump down their pants.

No matter what the implications, the divide seems sad. Despite the site's goal, these men and these women do not go together. If Democrats feel down these days, they ought to take heart: It looks like they'll win the breeding game.

I'D READ THAT my second date was a writer and a lover of World War II military history, like myself. And yet, upon meeting him, I felt as disoriented as Twain's Yankee in King Arthur's court: I had left home for our date and suddenly found myself, as though coming to after a knockout blow, in an International House of Pancakes in Virginia. Fratty-looking guys overflowed the booths. There was a fellow across from me, fresh out of "The Office." "The 'Buffy the Vampire Slayer' star was important during the Columbine shootings," Flapjacks was saying.

"What? Sarah Michelle Gellar?" It turns out she likes guns, and Flapjacks works for the National Rifle Association, and he has opinions on that, as well as many other things, such as immigration, gay marriage, and Tom Clancy. "You know the one thing that really gets me?" he would say, and then he was off. Unlike the night before, I couldn't bring anything to this date; he needed a true believer. So we staggered on. After a time, we came to the sprawling menu, a landscape of pillowy waffles laid out against vast bacon skies, cliffs of jagged, glistening potatoes, and winding rivers of syrup. "Two eggs?" I proposed.

"Country-fried steak, eggs with cheese, a stack of pancakes, and hot chocolate with whipped cream," he replied.

AND YET, TOWARD the end of the date, Flapjacks made a surprising confession: Secretly, he hates Michelle Malkin. A subversive note or two of liberalism is a feature of many profiles on ConservativeMatch—and of everyone I went on dates with. Shooter told me he drives a hybrid car. One poster does yoga, explaining that it's "not as weird as I thought it would be," and another reads *Outside* magazine, even though "it's a liberal, hippy [*sic*] publication."

The edge of guilty-pleasure liberalism in people's profiles creates an interesting tension on ConservativeMatch. The rest of the site emphasizes a tight community at odds with the world. This mindset promotes a sense of opposition to *everything*: Not only do liberals have the wrong ideas on taxes and abortion, but also on families, on vehicles, on entertainment. Such a culture constitutes a problem on a dating site, where the object is not to fit in, but to stand out. And, on this particular site, the way to stand out is through little betrayals of the conservative lifestyle: yoga, *Outside*. Some of these betrayals are not so benign. One man has published no less counterculture a book than *The Pleasures of Woman*, "a collection of poems, proverbs, stories and sensations about the supernatural dimensions of woman."

Even among a group self-declaredly devoted to traditionalism and family values, a fascination with the other comes creeping in. I suppose it always does in love, no matter your ideology.

FOR MY LAST date, I planned to meet a young Southern lawyer—a man who claims his interests include dueling and buffalo meat—at a funky bourbon bar. We met on a hot Sunday evening and sat outside on a claustrophobic patio. All around us, skinny, bespectacled hipsters were draped idly over their chairs, like sloths in a zoo exhibit. As we chatted, Bourbon and I seemed to become aware that, unlike my other dates, each of us seemed a little too similar to the people at the next table for comfort. "How is it for you," he asked pointedly, "being a conservative in Washington?"

"How come you don't have a Southern accent?" I retorted.

Bourbon, it turned out, did not merely possess *one* anti-conservative trait. He listened to an avant-garde form of post-rock. He loved show tunes. And, in the middle of our bowl of curly fries, he revealed that he helped maintain a fan site devoted to Tai Shan, the baby panda at the National Zoo. We might as well have met through PETA.

It seemed as though ConservativeMatch had failed completely. But later, when I returned home, I looked up my date's website. It was a plea for Tai Shan not to be deported to Red China. ■

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BOOKS & THE ARTS

STANLEY KAUFFMANN ON FILMS

Fast and Loose

HOLD A CONTEST FOR THE worst premise on which to build a farce, and the winner might well be this: a young Palestinian man and a young Jewish woman fall in love. Yet this is the premise of an ingenious new Spanish farce called **ONLY HUMAN**. It was written and directed by Dominic Harari and Teresa De Pelegri, a husband and wife who have made short films and, for their first feature, have walked right up to this impossible idea and made it funny.

ONLY HUMAN
(Magnolia)

A PRAIRIE HOME COMPANION
(Picturehouse)

Of course it couldn't be set in the Middle East. The place is Madrid. Rafi, who has lived in Spain since he was twelve and speaks perfect Spanish, teaches Arabic literature in Barcelona. Now he has come to Madrid to meet the family of his beloved Leni. The family, he knows, is Jewish. Leni's family doesn't yet know that he is Palestinian, and Rafi doesn't know that some of the family are, shall we say, eccentric.

Leni's older sister is a belly dancer, blithely promiscuous, with a different pickup almost every night. She has a six-year-old daughter who parades around with a cushion under her skirt, pretending to be pregnant. Leni's fifteen-year-old brother is fiercely Orthodox in this laissez-faire Jewish home and, among other things, tapes over the light switches on *Shabbos*. The grandfather, who is blind, is a braggart veteran of the Israeli army who keeps his loaded rifle on the premises. The father of the family is not at home, working late in his office, and "working late" provides more farcical fuel. The sanest of the lot is the mother, but even her peacemaking abilities are strained when she learns that Rafi, likeable though he is, is Palestinian.

Harari and De Pelegri understand the basic law of farce construction—what I call the Tower of Pisa Law. That tower, contrary to popular belief, did not lean after it was finished: it began to lean when it was only ten meters high, *and they kept on building it*, logically and well. Good farce writing must start with a canted base and then grow—grow is the key word—logically, but at an odd angle. A mere succession of gags is the death of farce: it must move organically, one action resulting inexorably in the next. This is what happens in *Only Human*. Naturally I won't disclose the story. I quote only one line: late in the film the adoring Leni is driven to shout at her beset and bewildered Rafi, "You killed my father and fucked my sister!" Problems, however, and however neatly, are worked out.

As directors, Harari and De Pelegri have just the right light-fingered *glissando* touch. Not a moment sags. Their cast relishes and fulfills the tempo. Guillermo Toledo and Marián Aguilera are ideal as the lovers, even if we didn't know we had such an ideal in mind. The mother is the accomplished Argentinean actress Norma Aleandro, veteran of film and theater in her own country and in Spain. (Some twenty years ago she did a one-woman show at the Public Theater in New York and won an Obie.)

A farce that begins as well as this one always makes me a bit nervous along the way, fretting about whether it will be sustained. So there is some relief mixed with the cheers for *Only Human*.

Robert Altman is a director more revered in other quarters than he is here. In general his work seems to me more an assumption of style and substance than the real things. To his credit, though, he has ranged widely in subject, and he ranges again with his new picture.

A PRAIRIE HOME COMPANION is a case sharply in point about Altman's transparency. The basic idea had possibilities—the last performance of Garrison Keillor's very popular radio show. The desired praise has already floated around the film: a slice of Americana, a treasure of popular culture, a memento of a time when roots and local flavor were valued in entertainment. But all these compliments are so blatantly striven for that they are never really earned. (For this viewer, a well-edited selection of excerpts from *The Tonight Show* with Johnny Carson would have done the job more genuinely.)

Keillor of course wrote the script, based on a story by himself and Ken LaZebnik, a screenplay that is unintentionally merciless. The broadcasts were done at the Fitzgerald Theater in St. Paul before a large audience; the film weaves between backstage scenes and onstage performances. Backstage we get chatter between two middle-aged singing sisters and the daughter of one of them, between two cowboy singers, between a slick security man named Guy Noir and practically everyone else; all this talk, in its strain to be authentic, is ploddingly banal. Only the onstage performing has moments of lift, particularly Keillor's diabolically homespun monologues and the cowboys with their risqué jokes that are reminders of such outhouse reading as *Captain Billy's Whiz Bang*.

Altman tries to slather art on all of the above with an idiosyncratic approach. Only about 30 percent of the picture is conventionally shot: otherwise the camera glides and keeps gliding. It also moves in and back a lot. This cinematic brushwork tries to bind loose items together and to aggrandize what is painfully trite or, at best, acceptably corny. In the same vein, the screenplay burdens the film with a glum visit from the executive who is going to close the show down and an even more portentous visit from the Angel of Death, who is here incarnated as a buxom blonde in a white trench coat. The point of her presence is never clear.

As is often the case with Altman, he has assembled good actors. Keillor is a

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given quantity. Woody Harrelson and John C. Reilly authenticate the cowboys. Lily Tomlin and Meryl Streep vitalize the singing sisters (though I couldn't suppress some rue that the superb Streep was in the role at all, good singer though she is). Kevin Kline, as Guy Noir, has the sort of part that suits him—comedy done with satirical precision—but the writing of the part is thin. Another good actor, Tommy Lee Jones, plays the enemy executive, but for all he has to do, his role could have been played by practically anyone in the phone book.

Once more Altman triumphs—in acclaim—over what he has actually done. ■

James Wood

Jihad and the Novel

TERRORIST
By John Updike
(Alfred A. Knopf, 310 pp., $24.95)

JOHN UPDIKE'S NEW NOVEL, WHICH is about a Muslim teenager tempted to become a suicide bomber, is surely a harbinger: in the next few years, one of the central novelistic subjects will be religious fundamentalism and its relation to Western secular society. Dostoevsky and Conrad will cast large, provoking shadows over the writers who approach the subject. Those two writers, along with Nietzsche, were the great analysts of the "underground," seeking out the psychological and ideological sources of resentment and impotence. *The Possessed*, *The Will to Power*, and *The Secret Agent* still offer the most penetrating evocations of the dialectic of pride and shame; they have proved remarkably prescient. The anarchist professor with a detonator strapped to his waist who wanders the streets of London in *The Secret Agent* claims that his superiority over the Scotland Yard detective who is seeking him is that such people "depend on life ... whereas I depend on death, which knows no restraint and cannot be attacked." This inversion has become the morbid mantra of contemporary suicide bombing.

The novelist is always an imaginative opportunist, and here, it seems, is one area where novelistic explanation might be richer than its sociological or political rivals. The academic and journalistic analysis of terrorism is usually too indulgent of rationality or too indulgent of irrationality: either the terrorist's motives are robustly explicable (the existence of a Jewish state, the American occupation of the lands of the desired Caliphate) or sensationally inexplicable ("but why this young woman with everything to live for set out one morning to commit her dreadful deed will never be properly understood...."). Such work tends to founder precisely on the unimaginable—on the margin of irrational rationality that seems to lurk in the decision to blow up oneself and many others. "My task which I am trying to achieve is ... above all, to make you *see*," Conrad famously wrote. It may be that to see, to picture such a human being, to know how he talks and moves, above all to envisage what he fears and loves, is to go a long way toward the comprehension of his motives.

So the novel should and will be drawn to this subject. And novelists, of course, have their own kind of vanity, whereby the temptation toward negative capability, to inhabit an Iago as easily as an Imogen, is hard to resist. If one can successfully "be" a man or a woman, a CEO or a cabbie, then why not also be a Muslim terrorist?

BUT JOHN UPDIKE SHOULD have run a thousand miles away from this subject—at least as soon as he saw the results on the page. *Terrorist* portrays an eighteen-year-old American Muslim named Ahmad, who, as the novel begins, is about to graduate from his New Jersey high school. Ahmad "is the product of a red-haired American mother, Irish by extraction, and an Egyptian exchange student whose ancestors had been baked since the time of the Pharaohs in the hot muddy fields of the overflowing Nile." (Ah, those Egyptians. This lofty genealogy is an extraordinary example of airy Orientalism, which, because the sentence combines baking and mud, clumsily manages to imply that the ancestors were somehow baked *in* mud. Egyptian bog people! Does Updike reread his own prose?) Ahmad has been violently influenced by his imam at the local storefront mosque, one Shaikh Rashid. As we encounter him at the start of the book, Ahmad is already boiling over with anti-American thoughts; we are thus offered no idea of what he was like before meeting the imam, what he was like as, say, a moderately Islamic fifteen-year-old.

What is most striking about this novel is that, despite Updike's massive familiarity with the technical challenges of fiction-writing—this is his twenty-second novel, for goodness sake—he proves himself relatively inept at the essential task of free indirect style, of trying to find an authorial voice for his Muslim schoolboy. He will begin a paragraph in his character's voice, and then, apparently losing any capacity for the necessary ventriloquism, decide utterly to write over his character. Here is Ahmad surveying the desolate downtown of the book's invented city, New Prospect, New Jersey:

> To Ahmad's eyes, the bulbous letters of the graffiti, their bloated boasts of gang affiliation, assert an importance to which the perpetrators have pathetically little other claim. Sinking into the morass of Godlessness, lost young men proclaim, by means of defacement, an identity. Some few new boxes of aluminum and blue glass have been erected amid the ruins, sops from the lords of Western capitalism—branches of banks headquartered in California or North Carolina, and outposts of the Zionist-dominated federal government, attempting with welfare enrollment and army recruitment to prevent the impoverished from rioting and looting.

This standard-issue anti-Semitism is obviously not Updike's own thought, but an attempt at Ahmad's. Then why not make it sound like Ahmad's? But then, what *does* Ahmad sound like? Presumably to set him apart from his infidel coevals at school—principally, a nose-studded sluttish African American called Joryleen and her thick-set boyfriend Tylenol—Updike gives Ahmad a formal diction, a "pained stateliness" that is

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redolent, I suppose, of many hours of Koranic study and deep, intolerant cogitation. The effect is that whenever Ahmad opens his mouth he sounds like a septuagenarian Indian aristocrat. In fact, he sounds a bit like V. S. Naipaul—and late Naipaul at that. When Joryleen invites him to her church, Ahmad attends. Afterward, he thanks her: "You have been gracious to me, and I was curious. It is helpful, up to a point, to know the enemy." Up to a point, eh? He walks Joryleen from the church to her house: "I wish to see you home." And the long perorations are worse. Here Ahmad tells a colleague about his mother:

> He tells Charlie, to be honest,
> "I think recently my mother has
> suffered one of her romantic sorrows,
> for the other night she produced a
> flurry of interest in me, as if remembering that I was still there. But this
> mood of hers will pass. We have never
> communicated much. My father's
> absence stood between us, and then
> my faith, which I adopted before
> entering my teen years. She is a
> warm-natured woman, and were I
> a hospital patient I would gladly
> entrust myself to her care, but
> I think she has as little talent for
> motherhood as a cat. Cats let the
> kittens suckle for a time and then
> treat them as enemies. I am not yet
> quite grown enough to be my mother's enemy, but I am mature enough
> to be an object of indifference."

One can understand, then, why Updike, in third-person narration, writes over his character so absolutely: he is icing a hollow cake. Ahmad has no personality, no quiddity as an eighteen-year-old American, so he is Updike's serf, ready for whatever the writer chooses to do with him. In Updikeland, this means lyrical authorial commentary.

AHMAD SEEMS NOT TO LISTEN to music, or use a cell phone, or lust after girls, or go to movies, or read any books. He is simply and only a block of Islamic disgust. When he watches television, he searches it "for traces of God in this infidel society." Ordinary Americans in the street are "devils," who are trying to take his faith from him. American families are rotten: "Even the parents conspire in this, welcoming signs of independence from the child and laughing at disobedience. There is not that bonding love which the Prophet expressed for his daughter Fatimah: *Fatimah is a part of my body; whoever hurts her, has hurt me, and whoever hurts me has hurt God.*" Even Ahmad's mother, long separated from his father, and warmly flirtatious, reeks of the infidel. She begins an affair with Jack Levy, a sixty-three-year-old student counselor at Ahmad's high school. (The affair is utterly improbable, but Updike needs such entanglements to allow his regular ration of sex writing, especially his loving descriptions of the phallus rampant.) As the two adults flirt, so angry Ahmad simmers, but in a nicely lyrical broth:

> Ahmad has felt the man approach,
> and then the presumptuous, poisonous touch on the shoulder. Now he
> is aware of, too close to his head, the
> man's belly, its warmth carrying out
> with it a smell, several smells—a compounded extract of sweat and alcohol,
> Jewishness and Godlessness, an
> unclean scent stirred up by the consultation with Ahmad's mother, the
> embarrassing mother he tries to hide,
> to keep to himself. The two adult
> voices had intertwined flirtatiously,
> disgustingly, two aged infidel animals
> warming to each other in the other
> room.

This is preposterous, of course—Jack Levy smells of Jewishness!—but more interesting than its preposterousness is the inept way, again, in that last sentence, that Updike surrenders any pretense that he is capturing Ahmad's own manner of thinking, and just sails off, pleasing himself, wreathed in familiar silks. "Two aged infidel animals": this is Ahmad's thought, one supposes, but because it could not be the boy's language or diction, it cannot function as his thought.

There is an obstruction here, a basic contradiction akin to the famous millipede overcome by lethargy when it discovered it had a thousand legs: Updike's style does not enable his dramatic functioning as a novelist, it actually nullifies it. When Ahmad speaks, he sounds like V. S. Naipaul; but when Ahmad thinks, he sounds like John Updike. Even Updike's attempts to forgo his own lyricism and make Ahmad sound stumblingly prosaic do not really convince. In an important scene, to which we will return, Ahmad is almost seduced by Joryleen. She is naked, lying next to him. "When she laughs, her whole naked body jiggles against his, so he thinks of all those intestines, and stomach and things, packed in: she has all that inside her, and yet also a loving spirit, breathing against the side of his neck, where God is as close as a vein." This might as well be Ipswich.

UPDIKE HAS SPOKEN OF HIS desire to treat Islam "sympathetically" in his new novel; and he has been praised, if a little wanly, for differing from "other novelists looking over their shoulders at 9/11." Unlike them, says John Leonard in *New York*, "Updike isn't writing from the victim's point of view." There is no reason to doubt Updike's intention. If sympathy brings understanding, let us have sympathy. But who would desire Updike's kind of sympathy? Wanting to dignify his hero, Updike drastically overcompensates and turns his schoolboy into a stiff stereotype—he's a bigot, Updike seems to be saying, but rather a stately bigot, for all that. How can it be sympathetic to a religion to present, as its exemplar, such a solemn robot?

Again, one is struck by the peculiar clumsiness on Updike's part. He surely knows that what makes Conrad's anarchists poignant and Dostoevsky's revolutionaries profound are the contradictions of their resentments. They long for a place in the society that they plan to destroy, and their destruction is related to their longing. Underground impotence, for Dostoevsky, is a hatred almost indistinguishable from love: this is his great insight, which is still helpful for anyone trying to analyze modern religious and ideological alienation. For a contemporary novelist, the way to animate these contradictions would be to evoke an American Muslim who sounded just like his secular friends, who indeed *had* secular friends (unlike the anchoritic Ahmad), who shared their taste in music and films, or was at least tempted by their music and films. Such a character would then be interesting in proportion to his resistance to a pressure—the great pressurizing blandishments of American postmodernity. All this should be obvious to a novelist on his second, let alone his twenty-second, novel. Equally, such a writer would surely know that the way to close down such authenticity, to freeze the novel in the colorless gas of the inauthentic, would be to make the Islamic young man an

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absurdly one-dimensional, furious solitary who has already rejected as an "infidel" everyone from the president to his mother.

Until the last pages of the book, when Ahmad must decide whether or not to bomb the Lincoln Tunnel, this young man is never seen engaging in any kind of internal struggle at all. So he has no real relation to American society. He seems attracted to Joryleen, but we are not told of any previous attraction, even furtive, to anyone else. Ahmad seems to have moved through his teens in hormonal quarantine. (How remarkable, for instance, that Updike, of all novelists, never courts the possibility of Ahmad masturbating.) Updike has done his research, and he has inky fingers to show for it: the Koran is quoted, sometimes in phonetically rendered Arabic. But again, because we first meet Ahmad after his conversion to radical Islam, we have no sense of how the Koran lived inside him before the great awakening. Edifying suras are solemnly quoted, but as a kind of religious logo, as blocks of dogma only. Moments of skepticism, of doubt, are promptly quashed as infidel ideas.

Perhaps this is indeed what the mind of a radical Muslim terrorist looks like, but it makes for a peculiar inversion of the very notion of fiction: Updike's "sympathy" has resulted in a figure who would not be out of place in a work of Islamic propaganda. The inevitable corrugations of religious existence in secular society, the awkward ungleaming lumpiness, the comic obstacles, the shabby paradoxes—all these are missing. Everything is too straightforwardly fanatical, too unsubtle. When an older colleague says to Ahmad that he is surprised that he is not going on to university, Updike has Ahmad think: "more education, he feared, might take away his God." Again, this is how someone might think in a novel—or in a thriller, more exactly—but is it how Ahmad might think in real life?

If one is able explicitly to think "more education might take away my God," then, by definition, one is already too educated, too aware. One is not uneducated. It is precisely Ahmad's uneducatedness, his unspoken or unvoiced fears and anxieties, that most elude Updike's earnestly foraging fingers. There is nothing in this rather simple, humorless book like the comic scene in the recent Palestinian film *Paradise Now* in which the two suicide bombers stand in front of the video camera to make their last statements: the men, looking forlorn and unsophisticated and boxily ill-suited, woodenly mouth their triumphalist sentiments, but are forced to stop and start again because the camera breaks down. Ahmad is wooden all right; but Updike, unlike the Palestinian film-maker, cannot see it.

II.

Terrorist is a sort of Islamicized re-writing of *Roger's Version*, a much better Updike novel that appeared twenty years ago. In that book, a young graduate student and computer geek challenges a weary middle-aged professor of divinity to a contest: the student is convinced that he can use computer programs to prove the existence of God, but the professor, the Roger of the title, thinks this is literalist blasphemy. The novel is much consumed with questions of faith and doubt, and some of this back-and-forth between the young literalist and the seasoned scholar is brilliantly achieved. Updike drapes these lofty religious questions—like a surplice over a naked porn star—over his worldly plot, which is of course sex-absorbed: the student begins an affair with Roger's wife (hey, some anal sex!), while Roger gets involved, if timorously, with Verna, the sluttish daughter of his half-sister. (She likes to say obliging things like "If that's really the hang-up, I could just blow you.")

Terrorist promotes a similar kind of sexual musical chairs. Jack Levy, the weary middle-aged student counselor, interviews Ahmad about his future, and becomes interested in the student, because, although obviously bright, he wants only to be a heavy-goods truck driver. In the interests of professional curiosity, Jack, who has the misfortune to be married to an obese woman, visits Ahmad's flirty forty-year-old single mother, a nurse's aide and part-time painter, and they begin an affair. Who wouldn't?

Meanwhile Ahmad begins working as a driver for a local furniture company owned by the Chehab family. Charlie Chehab, his colleague in the truck, is a robust, genial Lebanese-American with an affection for George Washington; he is by a long way the best-drawn character in the book. He is as fierce a radical Muslim and anti-Westerner as Ahmad, except that his interests seem to be entirely political, not religious. One of the novel's few subtleties concerns the way in which Ahmad and Charlie, though united in anti-Americanism, tend to talk past each other; in particular Ahmad's religious fervor almost always makes Charlie uncomfortable.

Unlike the bombers of September 11, Ahmad has not enrolled as a truck driver in order to kill people. But he is slowly maneuvered by Charlie and by his imam into the inevitable: an assignment. He must drive his truck into the Lincoln Tunnel and detonate his explosives. The last third of the novel charts his morbid

Dead Soldier

Where the living are, no one's missed him yet.
The best of them
will sing themselves to sleep.
The others laugh too loud and swallow pills
until their wet cells burst
beneath the skin like grapes
or bloom like urchins in a luke-warm sea.

+

High above,
the green moon glows in a windy sky
like a half-dead cat and its one good eye.

+

And who will coin his eyes,
and who would care?
He who failed in school has failed again. And he
who slept last night in a narrow bed
will sleep in tents of sand
with the collapsing dead.

KEVIN PRUFER

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grooming—meetings with shadowy contacts, oblique messages, tender leave-taking of his mother, and the like. There is one important encounter left, arranged by Charlie, who decides that Ahmad needs to lose his virginity before he dies. Charlie asks a prostitute to meet Ahmad at the furniture store, after hours. And who should that prostitute be but Joryleen, the sexy black schoolmate! Like Verna in *Roger's Version*—like almost any woman in any Updike novel—Joryleen has an uncanny capacity for fellatio: "Just let me take him into my mouth.... That's no sin in the old Koran."

Ahmad is shy, religiously prim, and keeps his trousers on. But Joryleen's black magic causes Ahmad to come in his pants, and he experiences "a convulsive transformation, a vaulting inversion of his knotted self like, perhaps, that which occurs when the soul passes at death into Paradise." The scene is silly. It is significant mainly because it appears to inaugurate Ahmad's religious wavering, the process by which his murderous fundamentalism unravels. Thirty pages later, he will watch a beetle on its back, and, refraining from killing one of God's creatures, gently right it, in a moment that "partake[s] of the eternal." We sense, at this juncture, that Ahmad will probably not go through with his murderous plan; and indeed the novel ends with Ahmad, now implausibly accompanied by Jack Levy (this book is more in love with coincidences than an English bedroom farce), driving through the Lincoln Tunnel into Manhattan. Gazing around at the thousands of New Yorkers on the streets, Ahmad thinks of them as "insects," dwarfed by the huge buildings. "*These devils*, Ahmad thinks, *have taken away my God*."

That is the last line of Updike's novel, and an impressively decisive one at that, but it drags a problematic wake. It is not at all clear that Ahmad has lost his faith, or is in the process of losing his faith. So what does he mean when he says that these devils have taken away his God? He has lost his desire to murder these American insects, but there is no evidence that he has lost his desire to obey God. If Updike truly means that Ahmad's faith itself is beginning to waver, then his novel has drastically failed to evoke that skeptical momentum: we have been given barely the slightest hint of a wrestle, on Ahmad's part, with a doubting idea. Indeed, one of the great weaknesses of the novel, despite its research-rich investment in Koranic quotation, is how fundamentally untheological it is, how uninterested it is in religious ideas and images. (In this regard, it is the poor cousin of *Roger's Version*, which maintained a lively theological dialogism.) All Updike presents is the encounter with Joryleen, the decision to spare the life of the beetle, and the apparently consequent decision to spare the lives of the insect-like Americans in the tunnel. So this last line comes to seem like a bellow of bravado on Updike's part, apparently keen to end his book on a fat note. It has not earned its fatal fortissimo.

STILL, AHMAD HAS CLEARLY SUFfered some kind of drastic loss of confidence, and it is clear that his paradisal orgasm with Joryleen had a great deal to do with it. So sex saved the innocent drivers of the Lincoln Tunnel! Significantly, in *Roger's Version*, sex is likewise used as the great theological slayer of theology, the mother of all theologies. As Verna bends willingly over Roger's member (a more apt title for the novel, surely), Roger reflects on the "ambiguity" of their coupled bodies: "Verna's plump and naked arms had snaked out from beneath the covers and she was pulling at my maligned undershorts, trying in clumsy sorrowful fashion to undress me, while her uncovered breasts slewed about on her chest. At her attack, the delicious flutter of ambiguity beat its wings, necessarily two, through all my suddenly feminized being. Not either/or but both/and lies at the heart of the cosmos." Reclining post-coitally, Roger realizes that he has fallen into adultery, but that this fallenness proves God's distance from us:

> Lying there with Verna, gazing upward, I saw how much majesty resides in our continuing to love and honor God even as He inflicts blows upon us—as much as resides in the silence He maintains so that we may enjoy and explore our human freedom. This was *my* proof of His existence, I saw—the distance to the impalpable ceiling, the immense distance measuring our abasement. So great a fall proves great heights.

This is Updike's gospel. Sex is both the earthiest of activities, the most human, and the most touched by divinity: not either/or, but both/and. We can have it all. We can rut like rabbits and pray like priests; our rutting is priestly. Theology sacralizes sex, while sex humanizes theology. In this way sex manages at once to rid us of our religious hang-ups, to abolish theology, and also to rid us of our secular hang-ups; it manages to make us theological, to divinize us; it is the perfect spiritual exercise, the soul's supreme therapy. There is certainly a sense of having it both ways in Updike's sexology, and a sense that this supposed "ambiguity" may just be a wishful ambivalence, or less kindly, an incoherence, the consequence of the writer's unmasterable need to bring theology into the matter of sex at all.

This kind of incoherence hovers around Ahmad's sexual encounter. In orgasm, he feels he might have had an experience akin to entering paradise. And nothing is quite right for Ahmad, theologically speaking, after this moment. Nothing is certain again. But Updike at once makes too little and too much of the encounter: too little, because he refrains from systematically extending the implications of the encounter toward an actual loss of faith on Ahmad's part (at no time does Ahmad reflect on the theological implications of his lapse with Joryleen); and too much because, as usual in Updike, sex is so wildly, so predictably, central. Ahmad spends his time railing at the sex obsession of American society, sternly lecturing young Joryleen about the importance of modesty and chastity; but of course there are few things in American culture that better prove the accuracy of at least this part of the Islamist critique of the hedonistic West than the sex-obsessed novels of John Updike, and in particular a novel about a terrorist that seems to suggest that the theological rot sets in after a sexual encounter. Did one not know, at the start of *Terrorist*, that sex would both wind up and unravel the plot? Did one not know that sex would be theology?

Is it not also interesting that two novels about two different religions can drive so easily on the same sexual chassis? This might just tell us something about the pan-theological nature of sex: Roger and Ahmad will feel similar things in different beds with different women. But it might also tell us something about the pan-theological vision of John Updike, in which Roger and Ahmad really pray to the same God, who is non-denominational.

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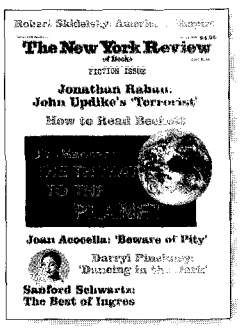

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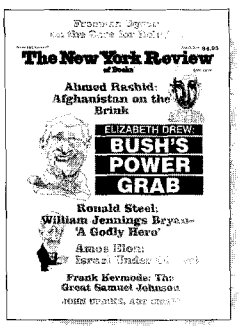

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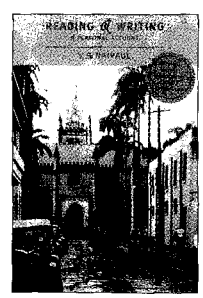

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Updike is acclaimed as an unfashionably Christian novelist, and much commentary, taking its cue from the author himself, dutifully trots out his interest in Barth and Kierkegaard—but there is a way in which Updike is a pagan celebrant rather than a religious explorer. His impulse is mystically broad rather than theologically exact. He is not especially interested in questions of faith or doubt, because aesthetics can always be wheeled in to solve such questions: the world is uncomplicatedly God's, and it exists to be lyrically praised. This has not always been a weakness in his long and varied career. It licenses what is best in his writing—his strong will to thank God for His creation by attending carefully to all its surfaces, from fridges to vaginas. But it is a weakness in a novel that is striving to capture the lineaments of a specific variety of Islamic mind. It is the otherness of Islamicism that is missing in this book. Despite all the Koranic homework, there is a sense that what is alien in Islam to a Westerner remains alien to John Updike. What he has discovered, yet again, is merely the generalized fluid of God-plus-sex that has run throughout all his novels. ■

Harvey C. Mansfield
Good and Happy

HAPPINESS: A HISTORY
By Darrin M. McMahon
(Atlantic Monthly Press, 550 pp., $27.50)

STUMBLING ON HAPPINESS
By Daniel Gilbert
(Alfred A. Knopf, 277 pp., $24.95)

I.

DOES HAPPINESS HAVE A history? Perhaps it does; but does it not also have a non-historical existence, a nature? If there is human nature, there might seem to be human happiness. This happiness would be available to all of us human beings at all times and places, like the pleasure of a cool drink. If happiness has a history, it must have some scope for change; there must be some difficulty or doubt in securing or defining it. Hegel, the philosopher of history, said that "periods of happiness ... are the blank pages of history." He assumes the ordinariness of happiness and spends his time with unhappiness, the yearning that creates great deeds and the disruption they produce. These are the conquests that move history along.

Take another famous observation: "Happy families are all alike; each unhappy family is unhappy in its own way." With the words that begin *Anna Karenina*, Tolstoy makes clear that happiness has a too-ordinary nature from which he and his readers will depart for the sake of a good story. Does the happy family live in parallel with the unhappy one, untouched by its fate, or do they get mixed up? Either way, we need to know for a beginning what happiness is, the ordinary kind of happiness, not the sublime version that ordinarily might well be unhappiness.

LIKE HEGEL AND TOLSTOY, DARRIN M. McMahon takes ordinary happiness for granted just by assuming that happiness is difficult enough to have a history. Along the way, though, among the items of his history, McMahon includes Aristotle's definition of happiness. We can pluck it out to examine for a moment.

Aristotle's definition differs from everything else in McMahon's intellectual history by not being, or seeming to be, the product of thought, of poetry, theology, or philosophy. The happiness that every ordinary person would know appears in his *Rhetoric*. After giving several overall definitions of happiness, Aristotle enumerates its parts in a wonderful list we could almost accept today. They are: noble birth, many friends, good friends, wealth, good children, many children, good old age, health, beauty, strength, stature, athleticism, good reputation, honor, luck, and virtue.

In our democracy, we care little for noble birth except as it might mean famous parents, and we don't care at all for the slaves listed under wealth. Aristotle does speak of women in specifying that you must have both sexes of the children that will make you happy, and he says that a people whose women have a bad character, like the Spartans, can only be half-happy. He does not single out the wife, as does Proverbs: "Who can find a virtuous woman? For her price is far above rubies." With these changes we today could make our peace with Aristotle's list. (One other—the "many children"—might give us pause.)

Elsewhere Aristotle says and implies more about happiness and human nature. Though some people are happier than others, happiness has an elementary attainability in human life. Nature does not give us desires that we cannot satisfy, such as yearnings for impossible security and power or in general for the infinite and the absolute. We can afford to be moderately desirous of things for which moderate satisfaction is available if not guaranteed, such as the cool drink that slakes our thirst. Nature with its provisions and human nature with its shopping list of needs work together to bring happiness within reach and thus to satisfy the human soul.

TROUBLE COMES WHEN THE last item of the list, virtue, comes into focus. Then we see (with Aristotle) that virtue is the core of happiness, that virtuous activities are the "mistresses" of our lives, guiding but not quite mastering us, because we need luck (also on the list) in addition. That virtue brings happiness, McMahon says, is the "classical ideal"—a phrase implying that virtue-born happiness is not a spontaneous fact. We then learn from Aristotle that virtue is divided into moral and intellectual virtue, the latter being the preserve of philosophers. With this news it appears that happiness is not so generally attainable as it seemed from the simple list of its parts. Most people may be capable of moral virtue, but only a few are philosophers. Moreover, moral virtue turns out to depend on what we think. It is not just the result of good habits; it is also affected by our opinions. Moral virtue is good when exercised in a good cause—but what is that? We can admire but we

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cannot fully endorse the courage of a soldier fighting on the wrong side. The moral person does not know what is the good cause; he has to consult philosophy to straighten out his opinions. But then philosophers disagree too, and Aristotle had to straighten out his friend and revered master Plato on many points, including the nature of moral virtue.

In sum, human beings are not as happy as clams. Our happiness is "sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought." Happiness needs to be examined by philosophy, and philosophy has a history. We have thus derived the history of happiness from its nature, instead of merely taking a decision that happiness has a history, as did Darrin McMahon. But we should not forget the definition of the parts of happiness that is universal and requires no reflection on our part. This happiness has no history and is always at hand. McMahon's book is not really a history of happiness, but a history of ideas about happiness.

Then how is happiness affected by ideas about happiness? We have seen that happiness becomes a problem when we focus on virtue, as Aristotle does in his *Ethics*, rather than list it as a part of happiness, as in his *Rhetoric*. A life devoted to thinking, to intellectual virtue, will be very different from one ordered by the moral virtues. The first finds happiness in private with a few friends; the other finds it with "many friends," culminating in public life, in politics. Now virtue, understood as the core of happiness, has two adversaries whose arguments are documented by McMahon: fate and pleasure.

II

THE HAPPINESS THAT IS thought out first appears, McMahon says, as a gift of luck or, more likely, as denied by fate. He refers to Herodotus and especially to the Greek tragedians. From the first, happiness is a pursuit or search or striving, the dramatic task of a hero, rather than an available satisfaction to all people. For luck, for escaping an unhappy fate, one depends on the favor of the gods, on the blessing of the gods (as seen in *eudaimonia*, the Greek for happiness). Yet the gods are divided against one another, concerned for themselves, and none too interested in the happiness of humans; there is no harmony between gods and men, no conception of a beneficent or at least accommodating nature that is not set against our happiness. When Aristotle interpreted tragedy as catharsis, he was trying to enlist fate as a factor in the improvement of the human soul, purging the soul of crazy excess and thus clearing the way for moderate satisfaction that is in accord with nature. But tragedy had its own more extreme view of itself that Nietzsche was to celebrate. It was the truth of the perilous human situation, not a purgative of our unwholesome, unnatural yearnings.

The idea of fate affects our happiness by seeming to take it out of our hands, by putting it out of reach. When happiness seems unattainable, we are no longer responsible for it. Acting irresponsibly begins to make sense as the only way out—a challenge to fate in the assertion of human desires too absolute to be satisfied. One becomes either a rebel against fate, and thus a hero with no time for happiness, or a pious collaborator of fate with no thought to one's happiness.

In the history of Christian thought, as McMahon relates it here, happiness alternates between the piety of reliance solely upon God's grace, which almost denies the relevance of human happiness, and the accommodation of Aquinas, which by relying on Aristotle almost separates human happiness from divine intervention. Aristotle has it that happiness is divine because in its goal of perfection it shares in the goodness of the gods. But happiness is also human because it is achieved by voluntary human virtue, which is not subject to fate. Any revealed divine law would seem to subject human happiness to divine will, or apparently to fate—unless that law were reasonable, in which case human beings could follow it without resorting to revelation. The difficulty in Christian thought is to dignify human happiness and at the same time to protect it. Men are dignified by being shown to be creatures of God, but their happiness is endangered if they are shown to be puppets of the gods. Somehow men must have a claim to divinity without becoming God and a freedom from fate without becoming rebels against God.

THE OTHER ADVERSARY OF VIRtue is pleasure. Although pleasure, unlike virtue, does not appear separately in Aristotle's list, it is understood in every item: all the parts of happiness give pleasure. Is pleasure, then, the basis of happiness, or is it virtue? That is the dispute among the ancients between the hedonists, the pre-Socratic philosophers and the post-Socratic Epicureans, and the Socratic tradition beginning from Plato and Xenophon.

What the hedonists say arises easily from the discovery of philosophy. Philosophy begins when the distinction between nature and convention comes to view—the distinction between the nature of the thing in itself, not supplied by men, and the convention added by humans. A sacred cow moos and gives milk by nature, and is sacred by human convention or tradition. To make a distinction between nature and convention means to question the authority of tradition to decide what happiness is for us, and thereby to empower nature. Tradition in the form of ancestral custom or divine law typically forbids things that are desired, but if the prohibitions are conventional the desires are not conventional; they must be natural. Typically, too, they are forbidden pleasures. What is naturally good, what makes us happy, therefore appears to be pleasure.

The first consequence of philosophy is to take one's bearings by pleasure rather than by repressive tradition. Pleasure is natural because it is spontaneous and does not require reflection or agreement; think again of the cool drink. The thorough hedonist might say that bodily pleasures of this sort may make us uneasy by reminding us of disease and death; other more social pleasures involve us with other people who will exact a price for complying with their foolishness. The most unhindered pleasure, therefore, is that of the philosopher, a spectator who does not get involved with the trials of life. The most pleasurable life is not that of the gourmet, the tyrant, or the hero, but that of the ascetic. Thoughtful hedonism looks down on vulgar hedonism.

The followers of Socrates repel the hedonist's hasty conclusion in favor of pleasure. They point out that the natural desires uncovered by the hedonists have their origin in wants or needs specific to human beings. What is primary is not pleasure in some vague general sense, but the satisfaction of specific wants such as thirst. The pleasure of slaking human thirst is not the same as a dog's pleasure; human wants are not an unconnected jumble, they constitute an order or hierarchy in which thirst may be slaked appreciatively with an eye to ele-

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gance and sociability, as in a quaff of ale. Pleasures are ranked by something other than pleasure.

Moreover, human beings admire the excellence of other human beings—for example, an enemy general such as Rommel—even when such a person does not bring pleasure or benefit to us. And we like to live with other human beings, even though all pleasure is individual, like our bodies. Pleasure being individual and bodily, to aim at pleasure results in selfish materialism, which cannot understand or satisfy our social nature, our love of justice. Hedonism cannot explain the human experiences that cause us to believe that we have souls and that our souls are capable of virtue.

III.

So much for ancient hedonism. But we live with something new, a modern hedonism combining virtue and pleasure. Moderns, McMahon says, are "more inclined to think of happiness as *feeling* good than *being* good." Here is a rare, down-to-earth generalization in this work of an intellectual historian. Mostly, McMahon gives the reader an experience of the variety of thought about happiness in a way that discourages generalization, but historians are always helpful when they remind one of exceptions, qualifications, and complications. Still, one does not understand the moderns unless one sees that modernity takes the form of simplification.

We began with happiness understood by its parts, as by Aristotle. Complications arise when thinkers think about happiness as a whole: whether the core of it is virtue or pleasure, whether the activity of it is contemplation or practice, and whether it is determined by fate or attainable by humans with or without divine grace. To return to McMahon, the moderns say that happiness is *feeling* good, a description that marks a turn from philosophy to psychology. The moderns turn away from defining happiness, with all the above difficulties, to focus on the pursuit of happiness. In the Declaration of Independence, "the pursuit of happiness" is a right that goes with rights to life and liberty. Your life you need for everything else, so you need it for sure. Your liberty is the best way to guarantee your life. What you do with your life is pursue happiness.

To pursue happiness, you do not need to know what happiness is. Feeling happy is good enough; it comes to you on the way to wherever you are going. Since you do not really know where you are going, you feel uneasy at the same time that you feel good, or, let us now say in the spirit of Lake Wobegon, pretty good. You are doing pretty well, but looking around you see others who might be doing better. You cannot be sure, but you fear that your life may be too short to try out all the possibilities.

It is very good that medicine is busy at the work of lengthening our probably pretty good lives, but we also need psychology, modern psychology, to keep us from trying to define, which means overdefine, what it means to be happy. At first we need philosophy, particularly the philosophy of Locke, to justify the pursuit of happiness instead of thinking about it, and to explain that nature makes us uneasy rather than offering us satisfaction. Other modern philosophers, especially Kant, are positively hostile to happiness, accusing it of interfering with human dignity and morality. But after Nietzsche has done the work of transforming philosophy into psychology, we can wave goodbye to thinking about happiness and slog ahead or wander around in the vague hope of "stumbling on happiness"—the title of the new book by the Harvard psychologist Daniel Gilbert.

McMahon ends his book with an appreciation of the "noble disquiet" that has always haunted human beings, and to this he adds the special modern disappointment that, having forsaken nobility, we still have not secured the everyday happiness that was supposed to replace it. Gilbert, a typical social scientist except for the style and the wit in his writing, enables us to see in democratic America the nature and result of modern philosophy without having to follow McMahon's survey of it.

Gilbert simplifies and dismisses modern philosophy, much the way modern philosophy treated classical philosophy. Modern philosophy, he says, produces semantic disagreements that can be sorted out if we assume that happiness is pleasure. Virtue may be involved, but not necessarily. We can also judge happiness, but this is not experiencing happiness, and judgment still regards happiness as pleasure. Happiness is pleasure because the feeling of pleasure is always dependably present when we are happy. Yet happiness is not so general that it is not specifically human, for "the human being is the only animal that thinks about the future." Humans use their reason for predicting the future, not merely for understanding how things are. And they predict the future for the sake of controlling it, "so as to do something about it." Humans have "a passion for control." Gilbert does not say or see that this is virtue after all, Machiavelli's *virtù*, the mastery of fortune. Modern happiness, as noted above, is a combination of virtue and pleasure—the sort of virtue that aims at bringing pleasure. Or is it after all a particular pleasure, the pleasure of control?

More exactly, one should say that happiness is the pleasure of avoiding pain, for the negative pleasure avoids having to catalogue kinds of pleasure answering to the different satisfactions of our nature. If pleasure can be homogenized, it will be easier to control. Yet if we want to control our happiness, we must be *aware* of pleasure, another ability specific to humans. Though both pleasure and awareness of pleasure are experiences, they are generated by different parts of our brains. Really? If that statement is true, which part of the brain generated it? Is there a part of the brain concerned with truth that judges the whole brain, or do we need to start looking for something like the soul?

Science judges the whole brain by means of measurement. All measures are imperfect, but science tells us that we can approximate. To do so we must be content with the "law of large numbers"—a law that produces only averages. So science is confined to the study of average happiness; it cannot deal with the happiness of an extraordinary person—a great scientist, for example. This makes it doubtful that science studies the whole human brain. What science discovers is that average humans see and feel in perspective, and the perspective is what is good, not as a whole but for *us*, what gives *us* pleasure. Or is pleasure the will to pow-

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er? Here the name of Nietzsche should have been uttered by Gilbert. He could then have asked whether the psychologist qua scientist has no perspective, or has a perspective above average humans, or has an average perspective like everyone else.

It would seem that ordinary people who see everything in their own perspective are seized by vanity. They all think well of themselves, and they all arrange the world to suit their own happiness. But Gilbert the psychologist is above them because he exposes their perspectives. Ordinary folks are guilty of "cooking the facts"; scientists are not. Then he sinks back into their midst when he exclaims, "The one thing I reserve the right to be right about is what I like." Here the professor speaks from his heart and joins the multitude. Psychology exposes the vanity of ordinary folks, but also vindicates it. Actually Gilbert seems unaware that he is living in a democracy, a form of government in which everyone thinks himself to be great. He remarks that he is a man who "lives in this century" and shares its "cultural conditioning." So much for rising above ordinary prejudice! So much, too, for the universality of science.

What is missing in Gilbert's psychology is the sense of sin. If all we want is pleasure (or power), whence comes the sense of sin? And we will not accept the easy answer that sin is a hidden source of pleasure and complacency. Even if living with sin is a pleasure, it is a counterpleasure essentially different from fun with abandon. Psychology needs to take account of such facts.

Another thing missing in the scientistic account is nobility. Despite Gilbert's denial that he is writing a self-help book, he offers advice to Ingrid Bergman in *Casablanca*. At the end of the movie, in the famous scene at the airport, she should have stayed with Humphrey Bogart, whom she loved, instead of making the sacrifice of going with her husband, who needed her. If only she had been better aware of the psychology of rationalization, she could have ignored Bogart's melodramatic warning that she would always regret not doing the noble thing. She could have betrayed her husband and, with the aid of rationalization provided by our all-too-human guardian angel, perspective, she would soon have "felt just fine."

Aristotle's statement at the beginning of his *Metaphysics* that "all men by nature desire to know" has become modern psychology's "all men by nature pretend to know." Aristotle might have said that as well. But he would have asked how one could recognize pretense without knowing the truth, and why the ordinary person's pretense might not contain some knowledge from which one could ascend as Aristotle did. The simple definition of happiness is not so simple as it appears, but it provides a base for our thinking more reliable than the futile and oddly complacent skepticism of modern psychology. ■

István Deák
Allies and Enemies

MY DEAR MR. STALIN:
THE COMPLETE CORRESPONDENCE OF FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT AND JOSEPH V. STALIN
Edited with commentary by Susan Butler
(Yale University Press, 365 pp., $35)

IT WAS THE WORST OF TIMES. Between 1939 and 1945, fifty million people died a violent death, the absolute majority among them not as soldiers in arms but as defenseless civilians. Yet it was, in one way, also the best of times, because the countries of the world rallied, step by step, against those ultimate rogue states Germany and Japan, and because German Nazism and Japanese militarism suffered total defeat. Moreover, toward the end of the war it appeared to many that the heads of the grand anti-Nazi coalition were firmly set on laying the foundations of a lasting peace and a more humane society.

More particularly, the future seemed to rest in the steady hands of Franklin Delano Roosevelt and Joseph Stalin, the imperial leaders of the two world powers. *My Dear Mr. Stalin*, the first complete collection of the correspondence between the American leader and the Soviet leader, pays tribute to wartime humanity's hopeful dream—except that Susan Butler, the book's editor and commentator, does not treat it as a dream. She believes that the opportunity for a bright future genuinely existed. Unfortunately, in her rather simplistic view, all of it was undone by Roosevelt's heirs.

Butler is the author of a fine biography of the aviator Amelia Earhart and undoubtedly did much research for this book. She often shows considerable insight, but she also makes factual mistakes that demonstrate that she is not a specialist in this subject. In her detailed notes, Butler points to the many vital issues that, between 1941 and 1945, linked the fates of the two countries. Her message is that if Roosevelt's policy had been followed, the Cold War could have been avoided. Maybe so; but it is also possible that it was the Cold War that saved the world from mutual destruction and hastened the welcome implosion of the Soviet Empire.

This does not mean that the cooperation between Roosevelt and Stalin was not genuine, or that it brought no benefits to the two countries and to the world. (It alone enabled the Grand Coalition to defeat Germany and Japan.) Arthur Schlesinger Jr., who wrote the foreword to this book and who is one of the great New Deal historians, shares Butler's optimistic outlook on Stalin and Roosevelt's wartime cooperation, but he also points out that even before the Yalta Conference in February 1945, Stalin instructed communist leaders in the West to prepare for new confrontations in the postwar era. And after Yalta, the Soviet propaganda offensive intensified. So one cannot agree with Butler when she writes that "Stalin did more than pay attention to what was important to Roosevelt; he followed his lead and made a significant change in Russian society."

What this change consisted of was, according to Butler, Stalin's instructions to the Soviet press that it take notice of Roosevelt's statement according to which the Soviet Constitution granted freedom of conscience and religion. Also, the fact that Stalin, at Roosevelt's urging,

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re-established the Russian Orthodox Church. Now, Roosevelt no doubt tried his best to persuade the American public to accept the Soviet alliance, but it is wrong to call the publicizing of the Soviet Constitution, which was a sham, a significant change in Russian society. As for the re-establishment of the Russian state church, it had been totally infiltrated by Soviet state security.

IT IS INDEED DIFFICULT TO IMAGINE a more incongruous friendship—for friendship it truly seemed to have been—than the friendship between the Hudson Valley aristocrat educated at Groton, Harvard, and Columbia and the son of a drunken Georgian cobbler. One was a master politician who defeated his rivals at the ballot box, the other was a rigid ideologue who had his rivals (and many other people) shot. One was a firm believer in a socially conscious capitalist society, the other was a cynical manipulator of great ideals who may have truly believed in the greatness of his country and the communist future of the world. There can be little doubt that the two men respected each other even while nurturing no illusions about the differences in their worldviews and goals. (The two had one thing in common: Roosevelt was crippled by polio, and Stalin had a withered left arm and a face marked by smallpox.) Because Roosevelt died in April 1945, when the United States was still an ally of the Soviet Union, his revered memory was perpetuated in monuments, streets, and public squares throughout the Soviet Union and the rest of the Soviet bloc. Stalin, on the other hand, who died in March 1953, in the middle of the Cold War, was execrated in the United States and the rest of the free world during the last years of his life and forever after.

The two men met only twice, in Tehran in November 1943, and in Yalta, in the Crimea, in February 1945. Both meetings were preceded by lengthy and complicated negotiations in which Roosevelt consistently played the role of the ardent suitor. He proposed several meetings to Stalin, not always with the participation of Churchill, at locations including Newfoundland, "either ... side of [the] Bering Straits," Fairbanks, Alaska, and Khartoum. Stalin turned down most of the proposals with the somewhat questionable argument that his presence was needed at the front. In the end, the places where they met were much nearer to Stalin's home than to Roosevelt's and Churchill's; and in Tehran, Roosevelt chose to reside at the Soviet Embassy compound, for security reasons, and not at his own embassy. The trips were arduous for the American and British leaders, involving lengthy flights and travel on warships. The pilgrimage to Yalta may well have contributed to the death of the already exhausted president.

It was easier to exchange letters, and there are 304 of them in this book, their contents ranging from simple acknowledgments of messages received, to congratulatory telegrams on the occasion of the other's birthday or in praise of the "success of your heroic army, which is an inspiration to all of us," to the detailed discussion of major issues. (Many of these letters have already appeared in print in other publications.) Mutual politeness was often marred by Stalin's increasingly rude complaints about what he perceived as the duplicitous behavior of the United States and its British ally. Roosevelt's own complaints were always mild: they consisted principally of protestations of innocence, or of attempts to explain the behavior of the Western allies. Not even such appalling Soviet crimes as the massacre at Katyn of Polish POW officers, or Stalin's refusal to allow the Western Allies to help the anti-Nazi Polish insurrectionists in Warsaw in the fall of 1944, elicited a letter of protest from Roosevelt or, to that effect, from Churchill.

Clearly, both Roosevelt and Churchill saw it as one of their major tasks to palliate and even humor the Soviet dictator, without whose help the war could not have been won. Valentin M. Berezhkov, who was Stalin's interpreter, wrote in his memoirs that "Roosevelt ... understood how important it was to find a common language with the Kremlin dictator. And as it turned out, he succeeded in finding an approach to Stalin that seemed to have convinced the suspicious oriental despot that democratic society was ready to take him into its arms.... But then Stalin had also decided to use his charm, and he was great at that." It is useful, for purposes of context, for Butler to remind us that Roosevelt was not the only American trying to please the Soviet leader. Joseph E. Davies, a millionaire playboy who was the American ambassador to Moscow from 1936 to 1938, had been one of the first American officials to heap praise on Stalin; and *Time* magazine in 1942 chose the Soviet dictator as its Man of the Year, and described him as the savior of the Western world.

During the war, as Butler explains, Roosevelt kept all the messages exchanged with Churchill, Stalin, and Chiang Kai-shek in the Map Room of the Navy Department, to which only he, his intimate adviser Harry Hopkins, Admiral William Leahy, and Churchill had direct access. The president did not trust the State Department with the cables, in part because of the isolationist conservatism of some of its top functionaries and in part because some of the cables channeled through the State Department took six months to reach Moscow.

Stalin's letters to Roosevelt, although translated into English by Soviet specialists, were often stylistically clumsy and grammatically incorrect. It is worth noting that it did not seem to occur either to Roosevelt or to Churchill to send any of their letters to Stalin in a Russian translation.

THE PRESIDENT'S FIRST LETTER to the Soviet leader, dated July 26, 1941, was presented in Moscow by Harry Hopkins, who had traveled there through Scotland and Archangel. In it, the president offered "to extend all possible aid to the Soviet Union at the earliest possible time." Thus the United States, a country not yet at war, declared itself ready to deprive itself of crucial war matériel to help another power that had not only consistently decried America as an imperialist arch-enemy, but had also been a staunch ally of Nazi Germany until the latter chose to attack the Soviet Union. Only Roosevelt had the talent and the prestige to persuade a hesitant Congress—and a hesitant nation—that this was the right course to follow. Recall that the extension of the Selective Service Act passed the House of Representatives on August 12, 1941 by only a single vote. In that year, the American Army and Air Force were inferior in quantity and quality to those of a dozen other countries, whereas the Soviet war planes, tanks, guns, and especially troops far outnumbered those of the Germans, at least until the first day of the German invasion on June 22, 1941.

The quantity and the quality of American aid in the so-called Lend-Lease program, as well as the speed at which it was delivered, were (along with the question of a second front) the most important issues that both tied together and

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separated Roosevelt and Stalin. As the date of the establishment of a second front was postponed from 1942 to 1943 and then to 1944, Roosevelt tried to console the Soviets with increasing deliveries of arms, food, and transport. The quantities transferred from the United States to the Soviet Union between 1941 and 1945 were indeed staggering: they included, among other items, nearly 15,000 airplanes, 7,000 tanks, more than 51,000 jeeps, almost 376,000 trucks, almost 132,000 machine guns, 4.5 million tons of food supplies, 107 million tons of cotton, and more than 15 million army boots. At its peak in 1944, Western help amounted to 10 to 12 percent of the Soviet GNP.

Those who, like myself, witnessed the arrival of the Red Army in Central Europe can certify that the Soviet forces traveled in American-made trucks and jeeps, and that the foot soldiers carried American canned food in their miserable knapsacks. Apparently their amazingly practical winter clothing was padded with American cotton, and they wore American boots. But we also know that American aid was not everything: Soviet-made tanks, airplanes, and artillery far outnumbered the American deliveries; and the Soviet T-34 and other models were superior in quality to the Shermans. Or as Stalin liked to remind Roosevelt in his letters, American tanks had weak armor, and they traveled in a cloud of gas vapor that made them extremely vulnerable to fire.

Transports from the United States (and even from Great Britain) to the Soviet Union had to overcome terrible difficulties, whether on the hastily built railroad line connecting the Persian Gulf with the Soviet Union (which was preceded by a maritime transport of more than 12,000 nautical miles around the Cape of Good Hope) or by sailing in arctic waters to the north of Norway. Losses to the cargo ships were especially terrible, and when, in the summer of 1942, the PQ17 convoy, which had sailed from Great Britain, lost the majority of its ships, together with the lives of 153 seamen, Churchill ordered a temporary cessation of deliveries. Needless to say, Stalin complained repeatedly about the delays.

The problem was not only that ever more aid was needed by the Soviets, who in Europe stood alone against the Germans until the Anglo-American invasion of Sicily on July 10, 1943, but also that the Soviets and the West had different notions about what constituted permissible sacrifices and acceptable casualties. What for Churchill and Roosevelt were intolerable losses, namely the sinking of valuable cargo and the death of a few hundred skilled seamen, counted as nothing for Stalin, who thought in terms of millions of dead.

THE BIGGEST BONE OF CONtention was the second front, which the West promised but again and again did not deliver. Early in June 1942, Roosevelt authorized Soviet Foreign Minister Molotov to inform Stalin that the United States expected the formation of a second front in that year. The president promised Stalin an invasion with forces sufficient to draw off forty German divisions; but Roosevelt surely knew that his general staff was preparing for an invasion for April 1, 1943 only, and that the Allies did not have the means to mount such a large-scale invasion, or indeed any invasion, in Europe in 1942. Later he must have realized that the Anglo-American landings in French Morocco and Algeria in November 1942 were not the second front that he and the Soviets had been considering. Today it is hard to understand why Roosevelt and Churchill so brazenly lied to the Soviets, whose young men and women perished at Leningrad, Moscow, and Stalingrad.

The elimination of more than 300,000 Axis soldiers in North Africa between November 1942 and May 1943—the majority of them Italians who were eager to surrender—was a great victory for the Grand Alliance, which Stalin did not sufficiently appreciate. Instead he argued that neither the North African campaign nor the subsequent invasion of Italy constituted the establishment of a second front. Churchill wrote to him that a cross-channel invasion in 1943 would be a waste of effort: "It would be no help to Russia if we threw away 100,000 men in a disastrous cross-channel attack." And Stalin replied on June 24, 1943 by quoting sarcastically from the many misleading statements the Western Allies had made regarding the cross-channel invasion. He concluded: "You write to me that you fully understand my disappointment. I have to tell you that this is not simply matter [sic] of disappointment of the Soviet Government, but a matter of preservation of its confidence in the Allies which confidence is subjected to hard trials."

The cross-channel invasion finally came on June 6, 1944, and it was duly celebrated by Stalin in his congratulatory telegrams. But the Soviets could never rid themselves of the suspicion that the delay in the invasion had been due to Churchill's insistence on mounting the major invasion from the south, which might have brought the Allied troops into Central Europe before the arrival of the Red Army. Stalin also suspected that the Allies had been waiting for the Germans and the Russians to exhaust each other, and that they invaded France only when it became clear that the Red Army was perfectly capable of defeating Germany on its own. In other words, Stalin suspected the Allies of the same Machiavellian behavior that he had exhibited toward the West between 1939 and 1941. (Still, it must be stated that, unlike the Western Allies, the Soviets kept their side of the military agreements by launching offensives whenever the West needed their indirect help.)

THERE WERE OTHER REASONS for grave disagreement between East and West, the most painful and embarrassing being the case of Poland—not only had the Soviet Union attacked Poland in cooperation with Nazi Germany on September 17, 1939, and annexed the eastern half of the country, but its mistreatment of the Polish population surpassed in brutality even that of the German occupiers. Well before the German attack on Russia, Stalin pressed for Allied recognition of the Soviet Union's new western

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boundaries. One reason why Roosevelt sent aid to Stalin as early as 1941 was to divert Soviet attention from the Polish question. Soon after the start of Operation Barbarossa, the Soviets yielded to Western demands and recognized the Polish exile government in London as well as allowed Polish POWs in the Soviet Union to organize their own armed units. A substantial number of these Poles were able to leave the Soviet Union and to join the British forces in the Middle East.

The terrible Katyn affair erupted in April 1943, when the retreating Germans announced that they had found the bodies of thousands of Polish officers who had been shot in the back of the head. The Polish underground and the exile government soon came to the conclusion that the killers had been the Soviets in March 1940, and not, as the Soviet propaganda pretended, the Germans in July 1941. When Germany invited a committee of the International Red Cross to investigate the affair, and the Polish government allowed a few representatives of the Polish underground to join the committee, Stalin broke diplomatic relations with the exile government in London. Writing to Roosevelt that the government of General Wladyslaw Sikorski was "pandering to Hitler's tyranny," he used the Katyn affair as an excuse for forming a Polish counter-government under the Soviet aegis.

The Katyn massacre is one of the best-known wartime tragedies, so it should suffice to say here that Roosevelt found himself in an extremely difficult situation. He never completely gave in to Stalin on the Katyn issue, refusing to break relations with the London Poles. But he tried to humor Stalin by apologizing for the behavior of the Sikorski government. He wrote on April 26, 1943: "It is my view that Sikorski has not acted in any way with [the] Hitler gang, but rather that he made a ~~stupid~~ mistake in taking the matter up with the International Red Cross.... I have several million Poles in the United States, very many of them in the Army and Navy. They are all bitter against the Nazis and knowledge of a complete diplomatic break between you and Sikorski would not help the situation." Roosevelt might have been very serious about the Polish voters, but he must also have known that such an argument counted for nothing in the eyes of Stalin, who believed the president to be as powerful in the United States as he himself was in the Soviet Union. He expected Roosevelt simply to sweep away his opponents.

The Soviets treated the Poles under their authority abominably, killing thousands and deporting hundreds of thousands, which often amounted to a death sentence. They demanded on the radio that the Warsaw Poles rise and kill the "Hitler fascists," and then they refused to rush to the aid of the fighting city. Nor did they permit the Allies to help the Poles. Stalin called the heroes of the Warsaw Uprising "fascist adventurers." Or, as he wrote to Roosevelt on August 22, 1944 (his letter marred by the characteristic stylistic errors of the Soviet translators): "Sooner or later but the truth about a handful of criminals, who for the sake of seizure of power undertook the Warsaw adventure, will be universally known. These people have used the trustfulness of the Warsawites, having thrown many almost unarmed people under German guns, tanks, and aviation."

The Polish question continued to bedevil Western-Soviet relations to the end; it was a major issue at Tehran and Yalta. But all later accusations to the contrary, there was not much that the Western powers could have done for that embattled country. No matter how embarrassing it was for Roosevelt and Churchill to abandon their best ally, the only nation in Europe that had fought Nazi Germany from the beginning to the end, the military situation made it inevitable for Poland to fall under Soviet control. Consider that the Soviets absorbed with barely a murmur the Anglo-American domination of Japan, Italy, France, and the rest of Western Europe, as well as Greece and the entire Middle East. Soviet rule of Eastern Europe was similarly a direct consequence of war.

IT IS USEFUL TO REMIND OURSELVES that, at the time of the Yalta Conference in February 1945, the Red Army stood 35 miles away from Berlin, while the Allies were still licking the wounds they had suffered during the Germans' Ardennes offensive in France and Belgium. Finally, while it is true that the Soviet aggression in 1939 against Poland as well as the Katyn massacre and other atrocities were among the worst crimes of World War II (for which the Soviet leaders should have been tried in court after the war), Soviet insistence on the annexation of eastern Poland was no more of an outrage than the Polish exile government's insistence that it remain Polish.

The area encompassing interwar eastern Poland has been changing hands for centuries; its interwar incorporation into the Republic of Poland was the result of a war that the Poles and the Soviets had fought in 1920, in the course of which the Poles first took Kiev in eastern Ukraine, and then the Bolsheviks nearly conquered Warsaw. Finally, the Treaty of Riga, concluded in 1921, accorded the territory to Poland, even though the ethnic Poles formed a minority among the Russians, Ukrainians, Belorussians, and Jews. In September 1939, the Soviets underhandedly seized the area, profiting from their alliance with Nazi Germany; in June 1941, the Germans invaded eastern Poland; and in 1944 the Soviets returned, solemnly re-incorporating the area into the Soviet republics.

So whereas mutual claims based on military conquest more or less neutralized each other, the new boundary between the Soviet Union and Poland more or less conformed to the demarcation line suggested in 1919 by Lord Curzon, the British foreign secretary. As a consolation prize, the three great powers offered eastern Germany to Poland, shifting the country and its people westward. But Polish claims to eastern Germany were certainly no more legal and historically justified than the Soviet claims to eastern Poland. In Eastern Europe, where ethnic self-determination was then on everybody's lips, the violation of this principle was the rule rather than the exception. Only the ethnic cleansing begun before World War II and tremendously hastened by wartime developments would solve all these problems, at the price of millions of casualties and incredible suffering.

At Yalta especially, Churchill and Roosevelt endeavored to have a few representatives of the London government inserted in the Polish counter-government created by the Soviets. They were temporarily successful. Roosevelt also got Stalin to sign the "Declaration of Liberated Europe," which guaranteed "the right of all people to choose the form of government under which they will live." In Eastern Europe, this had only theoretical significance at the time, but it is conceivable that the declaration, and other similar ones, played an important role in the Polish people's self-liberation less than half a century later. What counts is that, by the time of Yal-

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ta, the fate of Eastern Europe, including Poland, had long been settled. Back at the Tehran Conference, military reality had forced the Western powers to recognize the supremacy of the Soviet Union in that part of Europe. The Conference of Yalta was really not a crucial event.

Besides defeating the Germans and the Japanese, with British and Soviet help, Roosevelt's main goal was to assure a lasting peace. As early as 1941, he began to write to Churchill and Stalin about his concept of the "four policemen," namely the United States, Great Britain, the Soviet Union, and China, who would make sure that no rogue states would emerge again. This original idea gradually developed into the great concept of the United Nations, a world organization of free states that, unlike the old League of Nations, would be able to enforce its will through the agency of the Security Council, in which the "four policemen" would be endowed with veto power. It is hard to tell from the correspondence how seriously Stalin took Roosevelt's idea, but the latter went so far as to virtually isolate his great ally Churchill at Yalta, so as to demonstrate to the Soviet dictator that the United States and the Soviet Union would be the future leaders of the world. It certainly shows some interest in the United Nations on Stalin's part that he demanded a vote for every Soviet republic in the General Assembly of the United Nations, finally settling on extra votes for Ukraine and Belorussia. At other times, however, he tended to treat the idea of international organizations cavalierly.

Stalin seemed fully to agree with Churchill that the world would ultimately be divided into spheres of interest, a practical solution that no world organization could effectively challenge. Witness Churchill's notorious proposal, which the British prime minister jotted down hastily on a piece of paper, to Stalin in Moscow, on October 9, 1944. It adjudicated 90 percent interest to Russia in Romania in exchange for 90 percent interest to Great Britain in Greece, and so on and so forth. The proposal was taken so seriously that, on the next day, Foreign Minister Molotov and Foreign Secretary Eden took up the negotiations, with Molotov asking for more than 50 percent Russian interest in Hungary, and Eden arguing for a little more British influence than the miserly 25 percent that Churchill originally wanted in Bulgaria.

What these percentages truly meant was never defined, but there could be no doubt that the Soviets and the British thought they were practicing realpolitik, as opposed to what they felt were Roosevelt's utopian ideas of international cooperation. No wonder that they at first tried to keep the informal agreement secret from Averell Harriman, the American ambassador to Moscow. And yet from the perspective of sixty years, it is clear that the British-Soviet percentage agreement was an illusion, because Hungary, Romania, and Bulgaria eventually fell completely into the Soviet orbit, while the British profited nothing from their allotted 10 to 25 percent in those countries. Meanwhile, the Soviets got nothing out of their allotted 10 percent in Greece. As for Yugoslavia, where the agreement called for a fifty-fifty division of influence by the two powers, Tito played a trick on both sides by making his country both communist and independent. As opposed to the nonsense of the Moscow proposal, Roosevelt's United Nations is still with us, and so are a great number of other international institutions that the president forced upon his hesitant wartime allies.

There were as many reasons for continued cooperation among the three great powers after the war as there were reasons for an end to the cooperation. The happy scenes on the Elbe River in May 1945 were a good augury, as was the Soviet Union's willingness to go to war against Japan. In Nuremberg in 1945 and 1946, the Soviets, the British, and the French willingly accepted American leadership in prosecuting the major German war criminals. The peace treaties signed with Germany's former allies caused infinitely less rancor among the victors than the peace negotiations in 1919 had caused among the Allies. But Soviet anti-Western propaganda had become venomous by 1945, and the Soviets' bloody suppression of the anti-Nazi Polish Home Army was just one of the many outrages committed by the Red Army. Most importantly, Roosevelt died, and in September 1945 President Truman abruptly ended the Lend-Lease program, leaving millions of Soviet citizens on the edge of starvation. Later the Soviets refused to consider the Marshall Plan, the best and most generous of all American aid programs. Mutual suspicion now triumphed over mutual cooperation.

Reading Roosevelt's and Stalin's letters to each other, as well as the memoirs of Roosevelt's aides such as Charles Bohlen, B. Averell Harriman, Harold L. Hopkins, Cordell Hull, George Kennan, and Edward Stettinius Jr., it becomes clear that these educated, liberal, upper-class Americans mixed a judicious amount of idealism with realism in shaping the future of their world. This did not prevent them from often disliking one another, and later from criticizing their boss for excessive self-confidence and naïveté.

But considering that, despite all their mutual animosity, the United States and the Soviet Union never went to war against each other and at worst fought by proxy, one must admit that both the American and the Soviet leaders did a fairly good job, at least when it came to the preservation of humankind. What would Stalin and Roosevelt say if they could see Germany and Eastern Central Europe today: all democratic, all capitalist, all welfare states, and all completely free of Russian but not of American troops? Stalin would be complaining bitterly, and Roosevelt would rightly see his policies as justified. ■

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KAUAI DIARIST

Jungle Boy

As long as I can remember, I have romanticized the notion of becoming a hermit. In fact, I live just a few miles from Walden Pond, and sometimes when I visit, I play a little game where I imagine myself in the shoes of Henry David Thoreau—farming beans, watching the rain fall, and getting in touch with my inner transcendentalist. I guess, in these moments, I secretly nurse the hope that, if I could only disappear into the woods for a few months, I, too, might find enlightenment and deep spiritual contentment. Thoreau once wrote, "We live thick and are in each other's way, and stumble over one another. ... It would be better if there were but one inhabitant to a square mile, as where I live."

Lately, however, this particular notion seems especially far-fetched. For one thing, the seclusion that Thoreau found seems harder and harder to come by. In the summer, Walden Pond is overrun with swimmers and picnickers—the very mobs of humanity that Thoreau once sought to escape. The last time I visited the site where Thoreau once lived, I found a gang of suburban teenage boys guzzling beer.

On our last vacation, my wife and I opted for the hermit getaway package. We flew ten hours to Kauai, Hawaii, strapped on our backpacks, and hiked eleven miles along the rugged, cliff-hung NaPali Coast to a remote beach that we had all to ourselves. We drank from waterfalls, gathered driftwood to build fires, and slept beneath the stars. At long last, I was playing the role of the iconic castaway. Then, one morning, we ventured into the jungle behind our beach and wandered among the moss-covered stone terraces where ancient Polynesians once lived. We soon got lost in the dense vegetation, and that's when we stumbled upon him. "Give me a moment," came a voice. "I'm taking a shit."

Moments later, a sun-scorched, emaciated waif of a man emerged from a nearby bush. He wore what looked like muddy pajamas, flip-flops, and a black leather fanny pack with a sizeable jackknife strapped into the belt. He had a bamboo walking stick, and he was, of course, smoking a pipe (as all respectable hermits are wont to do). He introduced himself—I'll call him "Donald" to help preserve his low profile—and welcomed us to the island. "When did you get in?" A few nights ago, we explained. When did *you* get in? "Oh, about four years ago," Donald replied nonchalantly, as he set down his pipe and proceeded to pick the dirt from his fingernails with his jackknife. "Got tired of working nine to five. Had a bunch of jobs. Worked as a substitute teacher, a used-car salesman, a boat captain. You name it, I did it, but not anymore. I opted for early retirement."

Our conversation was momentarily interrupted by the sound of a helicopter passing overhead. Donald promptly ducked into some nearby bushes and motioned for us to follow. "That's one of the state choppers," he whispered urgently as he crouched amid the branches. "It's best to stay out of view—you know, technically, I'm not supposed to be living here."

When the helicopter passed, we came out from the bushes and Donald returned to picking his fingernails. I asked him if he had any friends or family with whom he still kept in touch. "Oh, sure," he replied. "I've got three sisters on the outside, and they cried when I told them I was retiring here. Of course, I still come out and visit them every month and a half or so. But, for the most part, this place is so inaccessible. That long hike in keeps out the riffraff."

I was dumbfounded and, needless to say, impressed that Donald had actually taken the plunge, renounced civilization, and made it on his own for the past 1,400-plus days (which is twice as long as Thoreau made it, I might add). To his credit, he was quick to acknowledge the gritty realities of hermitage—he spent much of his day collecting food, hiding from park rangers, making sure that dead animals didn't end up floating in his drinking water, and generally coping with feelings of loneliness. "I am learning to be my own best friend," he declared optimistically. "Of course," he added with a shy glance at my wife, "I wish I had a beautiful woman to share this with."

So this is the life of a hermit, I thought. Why was it that I couldn't recall a single instance when Thoreau described shitting in the woods or, more importantly, a time when he discussed the romantic shortcomings of hermitage? Truth be told, Thoreau romanticized virtually every facet of being a hermit. "I love to be alone," he said. "I never found the companion that was so companionable as solitude." His best friend, he claimed, was the pond itself. He wrote: "I can almost say, 'Walden, is it you?' "

But I didn't buy it anymore. It now seemed as if Thoreau was selling his idyllic vision of reclusion not just to readers like me, but to himself as well. As in: *I'm having a good time—no, really, what could be better than this?* What's missing from *Walden*, I realized, was the dirt, the hunger, the loneliness—the things that should have been there but weren't. Thoreau readily admits that he often visited the nearby town of Concord. He was never really in the wild. He was just a city-slicker who moved to farm country. Thoreau just toyed with solitude and self-reliance without ever fully making the leap into that life.

Deep in the jungle above the beach, my wife and I chatted with Donald for a while longer. Eventually, he said he had to be going. "Can you tell us how to get back to the beach?" I asked. "Come on," he said, with a flourish of his bamboo stick. "I'll take you down to a place I call Jump Rock, and, from there, you'll easily find the way." So we followed him as best we could as he quickly darted though the jungle. "This is Jump Rock," he yelled when we reached a boulder that jutted out over a deep crevasse with a roaring stream below. Then, in one swift motion, he leapt across the chasm. My wife's eyes widened and she looked at me expectantly. Some part of me yearned to follow him—it really did—but I knew deep down that I never would.

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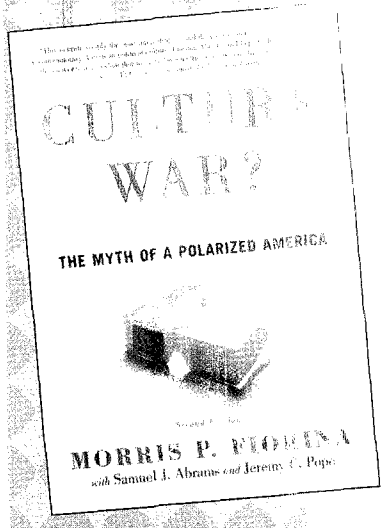

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Morris P. Fiorina is a senior fellow at the Hoover Institution.

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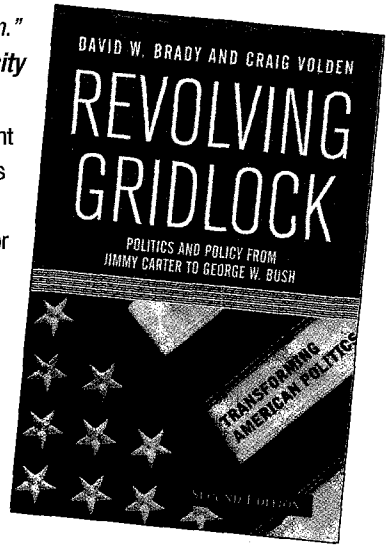
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David Brady is deputy director and a senior fellow at the Hoover Institution.

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